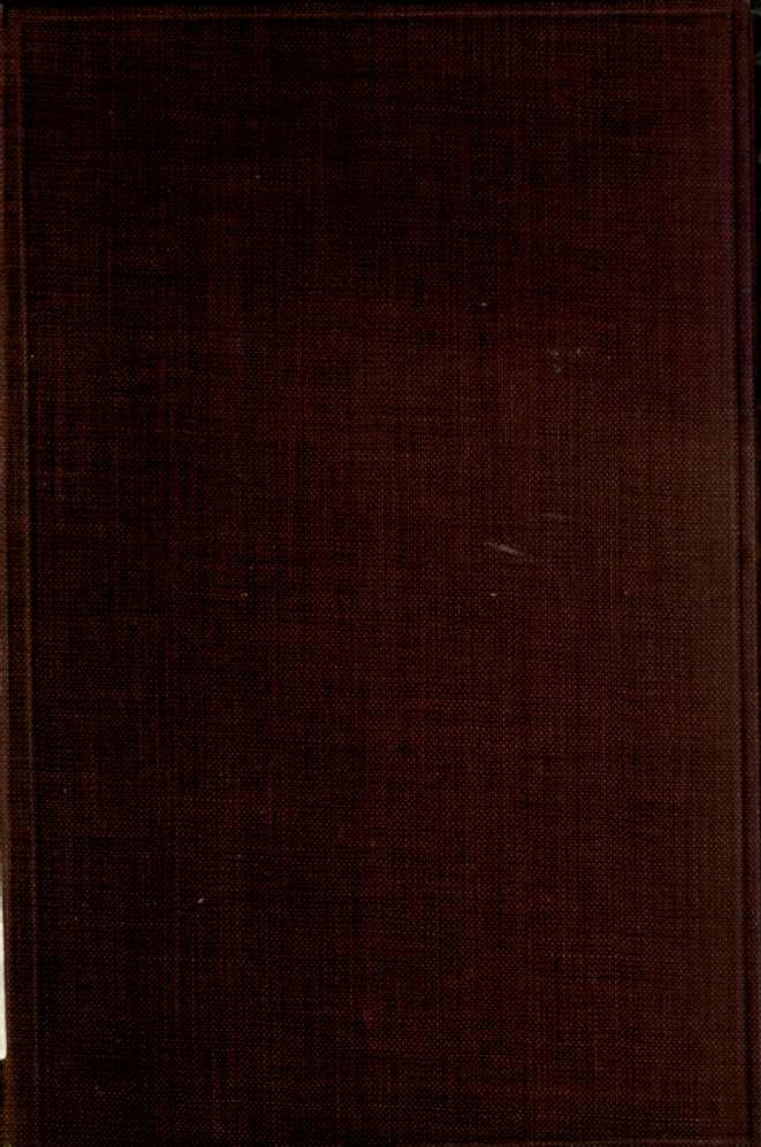
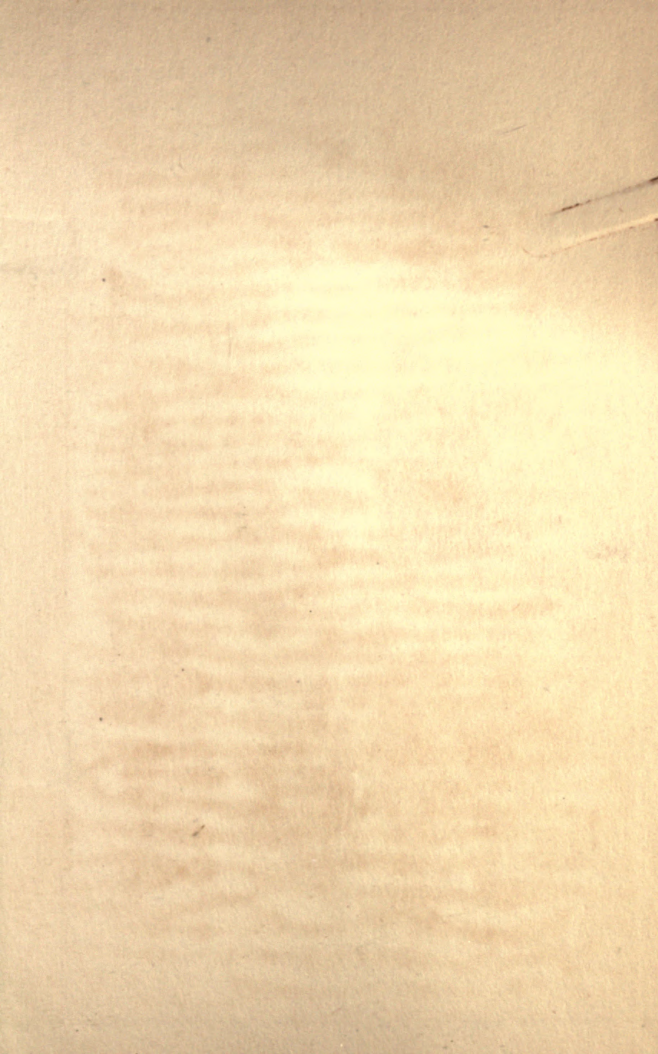
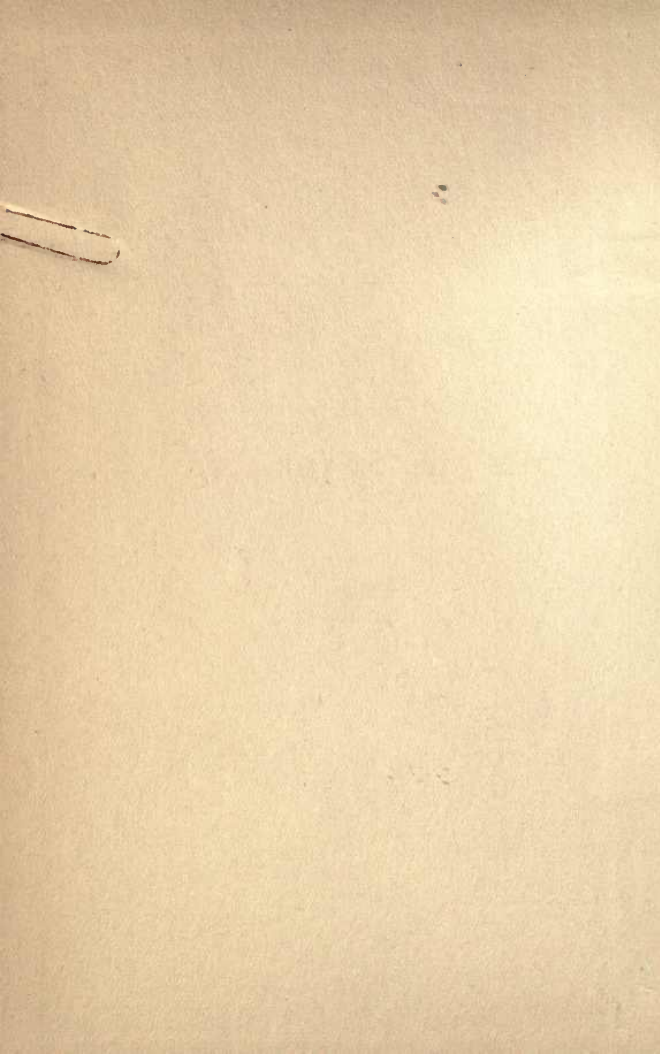




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THE CALL OF THE LORD

BY
F. W. DRAKE

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THE
CALL OF THE LORD

E. W. LARKIN

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PREFACE

THIS book suggests lines of meditation upon the revelation of Christ after the Resurrection and dwells especially upon the way in which the risen Lord called His followers one by one to their particular work of witness.

The events of the great Forty Days between the Resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost form a theme peculiarly suitable for meditation, partly because the Bible narratives are so concise, and partly because a true understanding of the period when our Lord was teaching His Apostles "the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" is so critical for a sound knowledge of the history and faith of the Church. The danger of thinking that our Lord's work and ministry were finished at the Crucifixion is still a real one. Meditation upon the revealed activities of the risen and ascended Lord will prevent us from an unthinking acceptance of theories and estimates of the Person of Jesus Christ, which, however beautiful in conception and generous in their tributes of worship,



are yet merely humanitarian. Jesus is God. And the activities of His Incarnate Life are not bounded by His Death upon the Cross. He ever liveth to make intercession, to bless and to draw men to God and to crown their happiness by union with Himself.

I have ventured to think that such a book as this may be useful to maintain and to deepen that quickened habit of devotional reading and meditation, which is often one of the most precious gains of Lent, but which is so apt to be lost for want of further help after Easter. No book of meditation is ever meant to take the place of our own Bible reading. Rather such books succeed in their purpose only when they send us back renewed to a more loving and patient study of the Scriptures, for there we find ourselves nearest to Christ. And the old saying remains ever true, "Life without books is sleep, life without Christ is death."

F. W. D.

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THE CALL OF THE LORD

I

THE CALL OF THE RESURRECTION

S. MATTHEW XXVIII. 1-8.

S. LUKE XXIV. 1-12

THE Call of the Resurrection is the most triumphant Call that ever rang through a weary and expectant world. It is the call of the Lord to victory. It is the vindication of Christ as the Source of Life to the souls of men. Rightly has Easter been called the Queen of Festivals, for it has set the seal of fulfilment upon all the glorious promise of the Incarnation. It is the festival of undying hope, the charter of human gladness, the pledge of the eternal triumph of good over all the forces of evil. To all sorrowing hearts Easter brings a glad *Sursum corda*, for the long tyrannies of sin and of death are broken. From the risen Christ comes power to conquer sin. From the risen Christ comes forgiveness to bind us close to God. The Sacraments that minister sure grace and strength to the bodies and souls of men are

the Sacraments of a risen Life. The transfiguring power that shall change this body of humiliation and make it like unto Christ's glorious Body is the power of the risen Lord. The Call of the Lord is the Call of the Resurrection.

A.

"Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." It is the humility of God that so mysteriously baffles human expectation. In humility all the great acts of God were wrought. The lowliness of the Incarnation is matched by the silence of the Resurrection. For an act so transcendent in its significance, so crucial for faith, so supreme in its revelation of divine power, man is tempted to seek surroundings of majestic glory and splendour. But more secret even than the Birth in the cave at Bethlehem was the Rising from the rock-hewn tomb in the garden at Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph might bend wondering eyes upon the Holy Babe, while Nature was stilled to peace and Angels sang of the Glory of God. But at the bursting of the sepulchre, the rocks might be rent and the Angel of the Lord, rolling back the stone, might strike terror into the hearts of the keepers, but no human eyes beheld the Lord of Life rising from the tomb.

Perhaps men might have seen, had they believed. But none believed. Men watched lest the disciples might come and steal away the Body, but none

THE CALL OF THE RESURRECTION 3

watched to greet the Rising Lord. And when He had broken the barrier of the tomb, there was no radiant Presence visible to the eyes of men to attest the new miracle of Man triumphant over Death. When Mary Magdalene first saw Him there was no glory to distinguish him from Joseph's gardener. The disciples on the way to Emmaus saw no peculiar glory in the Stranger Who joined them as they talked. The Apostles speak of no unwonted splendour in the familiar Form of their Master as He visited them in the Upper Room. He entered indeed while the doors were shut. There was that inner glory of a new submissiveness of the material to the control of the Spirit, which marked the distinctive character of the Resurrection Body. But there was no outward splendour, no arresting majesty of form, no radiance, no heavenly light. If the disciples could have indulged any expectancy at all of their Master's life after death, it was not even the Resurrection Body as Christ shewed it to them that they would have pictured. It would have been some dazzling, resplendent vision, victorious, all-compelling, that would have fulfilled their hopes.

But the ways of God are not our ways. And the Divine Wisdom was justified by the complete and convinced assurance of the Resurrection which the lowly appearances of the risen Lord wrought in the minds of those to whom He shewed Himself.

They had seen Him lying dead in the tomb, the bruised and pierced Body duly swathed in the linen of the grave, anointed and made fragrant with spices of embalming. And while they mourned Him dead, God raised Him up, "having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." In the Prince of Life there was a natural, inherent energy of vital power which could not be repressed. That Body, unique in its property of sinless perfection, was not subject to those forces of corruption to which our sinful bodies are exposed. That sinless Body, united to His Divine Person, could not be holden of death. It did indeed experience death. That was the crowning humiliation of the Incarnate. Jesus rejected that which was due to His own sinlessness and accepted the lot of the sinful, identifying Himself with us in death, that He might redeem us from its terrors. Down into the dark valley of the shadow of death went the Sinless One to make reparation for the sin of the world. His perfect love made Him identify Himself with us in the experience of death. And in suffering death He transfigured it, cast His redemptive power over it, and freed us from its dominion. Death did not mean for Him corruption. He could not be holden by death. His perfect Body passed through death and was transfigured by the energies of the Holy Spirit into conditions

of spiritual glory. His Body received new capacities, became a freer organ for the expression of personal activities, responding to the control of the will in ways more exact, more immediate, more complete than were possible under the conditions which prevailed before.

What the Resurrection began the Ascension completed. The Resurrection was a step in the full glorification of the Humanity of Christ. The appearances of Jesus during the Great Forty Days were epiphanies of the Body of Christ, emerging at His will from the hidden sphere of the risen Life, accommodated to the special purposes of the divine revelation, and continued until the work of comfort, of conviction and of instruction had been achieved for those who were to be primary witnesses to the world of the reality of the Resurrection. It was Jesus Himself in the fulness of His perfect Manhood Whom they saw risen from the dead. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see." And the Apostles have borne their witness, unanimously, triumphantly, and the Church which was founded in the power of the Spirit is the Church of the risen Christ. To-day we bow before the great miracle of God and appeal to the Bodily Resurrection of Christ as the pledge of our own justification and the promise of that perfect consummation both of body and of soul, which is the hope of the redeemed.

So we look forward with humble reliance upon our risen Lord, knowing that the Great Shepherd of the sheep will lead us whither He Himself is gone, and the God of Peace who raised Him so surely from the dead, will likewise raise us too—lifting us up here to a new and risen life of spiritual power, planting in our lives already, by the sacramental gift of His own risen Humanity, the seed of the Body that shall be, and then after the great Easter day, clothing us with the radiant Body of the Resurrection, no longer the body of humiliation, but like unto His glorious Body.

Pray for the grace of the Risen Life.

Almighty and eternal God, Who hast given Thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification, grant that we who do acknowledge the grace of His Resurrection may ourselves through the love of the Spirit rise from the death of the soul and be renewed unto eternal life.

B.

To the Apostles the Resurrection of Jesus was the summary proof of His Deity. That great truth which Christ had laboured to teach them under conditions of weakness and infirmity was brought home to them by His victory over death. Men may ask for other proofs to-day, because the

conditions of life and experience are different. But for those who had companied with Him all the time that He went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from them into heaven, it was the fact of the Resurrection which convinced them beyond all doubt that Jesus was God. To the intimations of unique fellowship with God, to the evidences of superhuman insight, profound wisdom and miraculous power, which the experiences of the Ministry afforded, were added the convincing certainties of Divine Authority, of Divine Wisdom and Divine Love which the facts of the risen Life disclosed. Jesus Christ our Lord "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It was the Resurrection which threw a new light upon all that He had done and said in the days of their discipleship. It gave coherence and point to all that He had taught. It changed a tragedy of failure into a miracle of divine success. It gave new values to every incident of human experience. The Birth, Suffering, Death, Resurrection, Ascension were successive steps in one continuous progress of divine redemption, wrought out in the Manhood of Jesus. The Passion and Death were recognised in the fulness of their atoning power, because He Who suffered and died was declared to be God by the fact of

the Resurrection. The permanence of that Manhood was assured, which God has taken to Himself as the instrument of man's salvation. He "Who was delivered for our offences" was "raised again for our justification." The risen Body is not merely evidential for faith, it is actually instrumental in man's redemption, the perpetual organ of the divine approach to man.

The Call of the risen Lord is the call to thanksgiving for the victory over sin achieved in His own sacred Humanity and assured to us through the powers of His risen Life. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." It is the glorious risen Humanity of our Lord that is the pledge to-day of our own victory over sin, of our own renewed fellowship with God. The Sacraments of Life are the Sacraments of the Resurrection. It is the risen and ascended Lord Who is the food of Immortality to the souls of men. At the Christian Altar we offer the glad Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which the Resurrection has made possible. Here we greet, here we adore, the very Presence of our risen and ascended Lord. It is not a dead Christ, but the living Christ Who gives Himself to us, refreshing all the powers of life with the quick, vital energies of His own risen and glorified Body. We speak lightly enough of a risen life. That risen life may be fuller, truer, greater in power and permanence than we allow

ourselves to think. For it is a life lived actually in vital union with all the victorious energies of the hallowed Body of the risen Lord. Union with that Life means the triumph of holiness, the assurance of gladness, the gift of power for those who are in Christ. Always as we look up to God with penitent, faithful and loving hearts, we may find all our weaknesses, failures and sorrows transfigured with the glory which streams from the Face of Jesus Christ, our risen and triumphant Lord. And the power and gladness of Easter will overflow from our lives into the souls of others, so that even those who understand little of the supreme significance of the Easter Victory of Christ will be caught up into the triumphant gladness of our Alleluias and will find themselves nearer God for their great joy.

Pray for the grace and perseverance of the Risen Life.

Almighty God, Who through Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, we humbly beseech Thee that, as by Thy special grace preventing us, Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

C.

"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The risen Lord has not only broken the power of sin, He has taken victory from the grave and robbed death of all its gloom. In the Resurrection of Jesus we find the promise of our own bodily resurrection, and in the very form of His Resurrection Body we see the marks of that glorious body into which our body of humiliation shall be changed, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

The Resurrection of Christ proclaims that Life is the goal of man's existence—Life which embraces man in the entirety of all his powers, in all the fulness of his manifold activities of body, soul and spirit. Death, as we know it, is not natural but abnormal to man in his perfection. It is not truly the debt of nature, but the outrage and violation of man's nature, as originally planned and constituted by God. We cannot place man simply among the brute creation. There must be a distinction marked between the death of animals and of men. To man God gave a spiritual nature in which the brute creation had no share. He was made in the image of God. God made him for ever-growing communion with Himself. That spiritual nature, had it remained untouched by sin, would have

been brought to perfection in unbroken union with the body through a gradual process of increasing glorification. That spiritual endowment was not simply an added gift, to be held side by side with the material nature, but it was to dominate and control man in his whole being, to penetrate, subdue and hallow his lower nature. The material nature by itself admitted the physical liability to dissolution, but it was destined through a life of sustained fellowship with God to escape corruption, and under the quickening influence of the Spirit to become the obedient organ and expressive instrument of the sinless soul. But sin intervened and the line of ordered development was broken. Death, as we know it, is the wages of sin. The sting of death is sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And "the strength of sin is the law." For it was the law which revealed God's will and provoked our corrupt nature to wanton sin and deliberate rebellion against God. Man had fallen far from God's original purpose of happy and perfect life.

But God's strength came to the rescue of man's weakness, and the Lord of Life redeemed the "firstfruits of His creatures" from death. Christ as the last Adam delivered us from the curse of the first Adam. The Word became flesh. God brought Himself into personal union with our race.

Very God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, took upon Himself all the original constituents of perfect human nature and became the new Head of the race. In Him was Life. "The second Man is the Lord from heaven," the source of spiritual life to mankind. Apart from Him man would be of the earth, earthy, unable by any process of natural evolution to rise by himself to any higher life. It is union with the Eternal Word, that union for which man was prepared by his creation in the image of God, which alone can bring life to the whole man.

The full glory of man's bodily life could only be attained, quite apart from the question of sin, by union with the Incarnate. The need for that Incarnation lay already in the primary constitution of man's nature. Only by the grace of union with the Incarnate could human life be quickened to the fulfilment of its high destiny. Sin apart, the entrance of Christ into human life would have been the happy leading of man's nature on its upward path from glory to glory in unbroken harmony of praise and gladness and peace. But sin brought agony, bloodshedding and the horror of death into what should have been a life of joy and undimmed glory. Jesus Christ was One in Whom no sin found place, on Whom death had no claim. His perfect Humanity, had He so willed it, could have passed into the larger world beyond this

life without the experience of death as we know it. But for our sakes Christ rejected that exodus of glory which was the natural prerogative of His sinlessness, and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. So in tasting death for our sakes Jesus hallowed it and took from it all its hopelessness and terror.

And in the hidden glory of His risen Body, as He revealed it to His disciples, He has left us a disclosure of hope for our own bodily resurrection. Those who are in Christ are assured that there awaits them after death a glorious resuscitation of the Body, which in the fulness of new and untiring energy shall be the perfect vehicle and expression of the soul. Here in this life we see how spirit partly moulds the body. Only with great limitations can the body attempt to express the character of the soul that dwells within. But the Resurrection Body will be the perfect and unhindered organ of the soul's activities, a glorified Body no longer weighed down by the burden of this life's frailties. There will be no need to gather together from every quarter the scattered material atoms that have gone to make up our bodies in this life. The identity of the Resurrection Body with the Body of this life is the identity of the full-grown plant with the seed from which it sprang. The source of life is God alone. "God giveth it a body,

as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." The quickening is a divine act. "The body that shall be" is the gift of God. It is raised a spiritual body. Glory, incorruption, power shall take the place of the dishonour, corruption and weakness of this life. Recognition is assured. As the risen Lord was known to His disciples, so shall we be known to one another. Indeed, in proportion as we have a soul-knowledge one of another here and are able to read the truth of one another's lives, so will be the measure of our readiness to recognise one another in that life where the spiritual body is the expression of the perfected soul. The very persistence of the sacred wound-prints, which remained visible in the Resurrection Body of Christ, suggests to us how real and abiding in effect are the acts of this life upon the Body of the Resurrection. We must reverently imagine that the influence on the body of the actions of our considered and deliberate will in this life is fashioning some of the outlines of the Body of the Resurrection.

Words of our Lord revealed by S. John suggest an even more profound influence which can be exercised by us in this life. Jesus said, "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Our true and living food, alike for body and for soul, is the Humanity of our Lord in its present

spiritual and glorified condition. Does it not seem that by our Eucharistic life, as we take into ourselves that "food of immortality, the antidote that we should not die," we are building up in secret that Resurrection Body, which one day in its glory shall prove to be the veritable gift of God to us in that "perfect consummation and bliss both of body and soul" towards which we look? Certain it is that this need not be beyond our hope. However little we may be able to grasp the details, or forecast the glory, of the Resurrection of the Body, we may recall with joy the wide-embracing comprehensiveness of the prayer of S. Paul, "May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your *whole spirit and soul and body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Pray for a worthy preparation of the body in this life for the bliss of the Resurrection.

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptised into the death of Thy Blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for His merits Who died and was buried and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

II

S. MARY MAGDALENE

S. MARK XVI. 1-8. S. JOHN XX. 1-18

QUIETLY dawned the first Easter day. A great peace lay upon the Holy City after the rough scenes of the Paschal week. No longer the turmoil of arrest, no longer the mockeries of public trial, no railing soldiers, no agonising Cross, but the unbroken stillness of the virgin sepulchre, as the holy women came bearing their tribute of love to the tomb of their Master. So absorbed had they been in the thought of Him that the difficulty of moving the great stone placed at the mouth of the grave had never troubled them till they had reached the very precincts of the garden. And even then they were not deterred. They held on their way hopefully. "And when they looked, they saw the stone was rolled away." God had made the path easy for their offering of love. Eagerly they pressed on, bearing their sweet spices into the very sepulchre itself. And there a great wonder turned their confidence into fear. The Body that

they looked for was not there. But an Angel, sitting on the right side of the tomb, welcomed them with the words, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, Which was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him." And as they stood terrified and bewildered, realising only the failure of their loving plans for His anointing, they heard themselves charged with a new mission for the Master Himself. "Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." Dazed with wonder, the women turned immediately and fled out of the tomb, bearing to the startled Apostles in the city a confused story of "a vision of Angels which said that He was alive."

But Mary of Magdala had already broken away from the others and carried to S. Peter and S. John the first news that the Body of Jesus was gone. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." And as the two disciples hastened to the garden, Mary followed and waited without, while they entered into the sepulchre. It was indeed true. They "found it even so as the women had said, but Him they saw not," The two disciples turned away from the tomb to carry their news to the brethren in Jerusalem. But Mary still lingered. If He was not here, still this was the last place where she had

seen Him, and the spell of the sepulchre, that sad trysting-place of bereaved love, held her fast. "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." Presently looking in, she saw "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain." To them she told the burden of her sorrow, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Then it was that turning back she found herself face to face with Jesus Himself, and received with wonder and adoring love the first revelation of the risen Lord.

A.

In Mary of Magdala Christ shewed the transforming power of His redemptive love. Before ever that first Easter day had dawned, the glory of Christ's inherent resurrection power had already shined in the heart of Mary. First amongst those to whom Christ shewed himself alive after His Passion stands Mary Magdalene, whose life already had been a witness to the divine power of the Master. In her Christ seems to shew the purpose of many a silent life. How little we know of all that Mary said. How much the simple story of her life has meant. Life is so much more than speech.

We are asked at times to piece together the precious fragmentary words of Jesus, and from them alone men would compile His Gospel, as

though Christ's spoken words were the sum and head of all His teaching. Gracious indeed, powerful and pregnant with the beauty of eternal truth, are the words of Christ. But more powerful, more significant still of the Divine purpose, are His acts. What He did and what He suffered in His own Incarnate Person must far outweigh in significance all that He ever said. The revelation of His Life is more than the revelation of His Word. The death upon the Cross itself means more, infinitely more, than the seven Words from the Cross can ever express. The Resurrection in itself means more than any words of the risen Lord can ever reveal. We may marvel sometimes at the scanty record left of the public teaching of One Who, proclaiming Himself the very Prophet and Teacher of God, spake as never man spake. But the reverent thinker, meditating upon the ways of God, may read something of the Divine purpose in the very meagreness of the written record of Christ's spoken words. God would point us to what Christ is in Himself, to the wonder of His Person, to the influence of His Life, to the triumph of His Death. Christ Himself is the truest Word of God. In His very acts God speaks.

So also in the lives rather than in the words of those whom Christ gathers round Himself, God speaks. The power of personality is seen at its greatest in its influence upon the lives of others.

The men and women, so unexpectedly but so convincingly transfigured by the glory of Christ's life, were to be the witnesses, whose testimony should be beyond gainsaying, whose simple lives of holiness should speak more powerfully than any eloquence of words, more lastingly than any glorious deed. This was the purpose of the Magdalene's life.

The dear Lord's best interpreters
Are humble, human souls.
The gospel of a life like hers
Is more than books or scrolls.
From scheme and creed the light dies out,
The saintly fact survives.
The Blessed Master who can doubt
Revealed in holy lives?

Such indeed was she to whom Jesus first revealed Himself after His Resurrection. Mary Magdalene witnesses to the glorious power of Christ that can avail to free a soul from the passionate entanglements of sin and set it triumphant on the heights of holy love, radiant in the light and peace of God. And many a quiet life, lived in our midst to-day, bears the same holy witness, and spreads the same gospel of divine redemption, responding to the Call of the Lord with grateful love.

What is the witness which my own life bears ?

B.

Mary " turned herself back and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, ' Woman, why weepest thou ? Whom

seekest thou?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, 'Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away.' " So the eager Magdalene pressed on in the search after her Lord. In that calm face, touched now with the beauty of a noble grief, in those clear eyes lit with the lustre of a pure and holy love, who would have recognised that Mary, whose insolent defiance of the cherished sanctities of home had made her name an evil byword in Magdala?

Those days of sorrow, since in sad wonder she had watched the death of Christ upon the Cross, had been days of revelation for her. Never had she realised more clearly all that she owed to the love and power of Him, Whom she delighted to call Rabboni, Master, With deepening glow of penitence and shame she recalled the passionate splendours of that old life of sin from which she had been drawn. Hers was that mysterious gift of beauty which, wherever it may be found, reflects the uncreated loveliness of God Himself. Wealth added to beauty exposed her to fresh temptations of selfishness and pleasure. Quick vitality and eager impulse gave keenness to her enthusiasm and depth to her desires. Nobler ideals of truer happiness may have stirred at times in the sanctuary of her heart, but the joy, which she knew by experience, was the passing, passionate joy of sensuous bliss. At first indeed

the rapture of such abandonment would absorb all the energies of life. Passion so intense could readily defy the rigorous conventions, even of that strict social code in which she had been brought up. When religion so often meant the formalism of pharisaic pride, when conventional devotion was so frequently the cloak of hypocrisy and avarice, was it strange that an enthusiastic and impulsive nature should cast off the sanctions of a morality which was so impotent to govern the lives of those around her? The very intensity of her nature became the measure of her misery. "Seven devils" took possession of the soul that was made for the dwelling-place of God Himself. It seemed as though the Magdalene had lost control of her own soul. The city in its righteous wrath had nothing but scorn and condemnation for the outcast. But scorn never heals and condemnation never restores an erring soul. Who can tell what was passing in the heart of Mary herself? How often the acts of a life belie both what the heart desires and what the mind approves. It needs time for the will to regain power over the life, even after new hopes have come to birth. This only we can tell. Whether confirmed in hardness by the cruelty of the world, or touched at heart by the stirring of new ideals and the hope of better things, Mary felt herself alone. There was none that understood, none that cared, none that could draw her from her isolation and reveal the

true self hidden beneath the cloak of wanton gaiety and pleasure. It was no wonder that she could recall with the vividness of immediate vision the first glance from the Eyes of Jesus. Before His gaze her passions fell, at His command the devils left her. An agony of shame and fear broke over her. Slowly conscience resumed its sway. The look of holy Love piercing through the secrets of her heart revealed the love of holier things within. The voice of Truth and Holiness called to that inner truth of self and roused response. Mary came to herself, and coming to herself, came to Him for Whom she had been made. Upon Him now were outpoured the rich treasures of a soul restored to peace, quickened to pure desire, touched with that spirit of reparation which no sacrifice, no toil, no suffering can ever satisfy. In her were seen the vivifying powers of the divine pardon—separation from sin, the glad assurance of sin forgiven at the very moment when it was most recognised as sin, the soul attuned to lowliness, prepared for happy ministries of service and of love. She made glad offering of her wealth, and the days that followed, with their manifold duties of generous service and watchful ministry, had been all too short for the Magdalene to prove her grateful devotion to the Lord and Master of her life.

Thus the Magdalene waited at the tomb, renewing her penitence with every throb of anxiety and

fear. And to her before all others Jesus shewed Himself, that her penitence might be rewarded, and that the world might know it was indeed the Saviour of souls Who, coming to seek and to save that which was lost, had risen from the dead, that He might carry out His work of salvation and stablish the hearts of the faithful and the penitent in the power of the Resurrection. It is indeed to the penitent that the revelation of Christ first comes. Penitence is the measure of our capacity for revelation. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. It is only by penitence that we can achieve holiness. We must put away our sin and forsake all that is unholy. Our sin may not take the actual form of Mary's sin. But we must reflect that the sin which shews most openly to human eyes is not always the most deadly in the sight of God. Sins of the flesh have indeed a peculiarly devastating power, paralysing the conscience, narrowing the vision, poisoning the springs of love, making havoc of all the holiest relations of life, carrying sacrilege into the very temple of God Himself, pitiless in the injuries that they inflict on the lives of others. But there are spiritual sins more deadly still. And these may be ours. The pride of the self-blinded pharisee, the cruel arrogance of the worldly and ambitious, the complacent self-sufficiency of the slothful are more fatal than the sin of the wanton. But in the sin of the Magdalene perhaps the essence of all sin is most clearly visible. For

sin is always the misdirection of love, sin is always the violation of the divine Will of Holiness, sin is always an injury inflicted upon other lives. So also in Mary's penitence can we see the mirror of all true and godly sorrow for sin. For penitence must be always the right direction of love, penitence must ever identify self with the holy Will of God, and bring the soul back into loving and fruitful fellowship with others.

And to-day if we wish for the clear vision of the risen Lord it will be through penitence that our eyes will be opened. There is no sin that is beyond the forgiving power of God, if we are seeking to be forgiven. Mysterious and wonderful are the ways of the divine healing. To the pardoned the very experience of sin creates the opportunity of a new ministry of sympathetic helpfulness to other souls. The very extravagances of misdirected love point the way to a new fruitfulness of loving service. The remembrance of faculties once misused and degraded stirs the renewed will to a more generous and unselfish exercise of the same capacities, now hallowed by the cleansing grace of God. And as it was with Mary of Magdala, so will it be with us. Every day will add to our sorrow for the sin that is past. Shame will grow as the sense of forgiveness becomes more and more assured. However great may be the miracle of God's restoring power, we shall never be glad that we have sinned. But we shall live in

the joy of Christ's forgiveness. And the gladness of it will make us gentle towards those who sin. Not only shall we find that Jesus Himself looks upon us in our forgiveness with eyes of eternal hope and love, untouched with any spirit of reproof, not only does He assure us that we can indeed forget those things which are now behind and in His resurrection power press toward the mark for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. But those also who are Christ's, will look upon us in our penitence with the eyes of Christ Himself, welcoming us gently and hopefully to their fellowship. Assuredly it must have been one of the wonders of the Magdalene's life that she found herself unquestioningly accepted at the Master's bidding into the company of the Virgin Mother and the holy women. We, too, in our turn, as we are gathered into the fellowship of the Crucified, can never forget the duty of glad, generous welcome which we ourselves shall give to those whom Jesus calls to share the joy of forgiveness and the peace of the divine pardon.

Thank God for the gift of penitence.

O Almighty and eternal God, Who through the merits of Thy Son Jesus Christ hast forgiven me all my sin, I thank Thee for the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit which has led me to true repentance. Teach me day by day to grow in penitence and love, that I may give myself to Thy service and may win others to the knowledge of Thy grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C.

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” The call of the risen Lord reveals the secret of all vocation. It is the call of One Who knows us better than we know ourselves, Who loves us even as we are with an eternal steadfastness and hope. It is the call of One Who never despairs, Who will never allow the creature to feel itself bereft of the infinite resources of the almighty Creator. It was thus that with one word of intimate recollection Christ called Mary to the startled recognition of her Master, “Rabboni.” It was indeed the very voice of Jesus Himself. What memories it stirred in Mary’s heart ! His Presence aroused at once all the old instincts of worship. She would fling herself at His feet as in those first days of penitential adoration. But no, this was to be no moment of selfish gladness. She must not think that this was only the return of those first days of continued visible companionship. There are others, too, waiting for the certified assurance that He lives, others who have slowly to be guided into the understanding of that new and wondrous Resurrection Life which shall find its consummation in the Ascension and in the unseen fellowship of the glorified Lord. Mary is the first to receive the promise of that new Presence, to hear of that fellowship which, extending through the ages, shall give to all men those very opportunities of re-birth and renewal

through the touch of Christ, which Mary had herself enjoyed. "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."

Mary waited for no other blessing for herself, content with this simple duty. The certainty that Christ lived filled all her heart. She could wait the Master's time for His fuller revelation. It is this mutual trust which makes the glory of vocation. Christ knows that we, with all our individual weaknesses, are really able to fulfil the work for which He has chosen us. Indeed He knows the utter weakness of our natural powers. Even the greatest of human capacities, the most subtle powers of intellect, the deepest faculties of affection, the surest instincts of goodness, apart from Him are unstable and can never abidingly excel. But He also sees that which we cannot see. He sees how, within the soul united faithfully to Himself, all the natural powers of the life are subtly reinforced by the quickening grace of His own sacred Humanity. He sees how beneath the manifest poverty of unsuccessful endeavour and the futile weariness of imperfect human effort there lie the inexhaustible riches, the unfailing perfection, and the hidden splendour of the energies of the Divine Spirit Himself, suffusing all the faculties of life with the promise of eternal achievement.

That is why the first vocation of the soul is always to God Himself. For in Him alone lies the power of fulfilment. To the Mind of the Eternal, with Whom there is nothing but the timeless present, the call to God and the call to work are one and simultaneous. But with us creatures of time, the vocations are recognised, and must be realised, in successive moments of time. And it is the call to God which must be satisfied first. It is the work which most often is the first to engage our notice. We recognise in ourselves peculiar aptitudes and faculties which suggest a definite career and point to a particular work. The work stands there primarily calling us, before we have seen that behind it is God, drawing us by the very work to find Himself. Many never realise more than the relentless call of the work. Work thus undertaken, however noble, will always fall short of perfection, will always lack the fullest consecration, and in time of strain will suffer for want of adequate inspiration. It misses the true note of eternity and achievement.

The nature of our work may be simple, as the work of Mary was, or it may be difficult. But the work itself is not all, is not the end. The end is God, Who, just because He is also the Beginning, can alone enable us for what He calls us to do. Then all work wakes God in us, if we understand the call of life aright. So indeed was it with Mary of Magdala. Christ, Who had called her, was the God Who

enabled her, the God Who trusted her, Who, in the struggling loyalty and humble obedience which she herself distrusted, could see the growing perfection for which in the destinies of God she had been created.

And have we not here one of the most neglected inspirations of life to-day? Do we not most intensely need this sense of our individual vocation coming out of the Heart and Mind of a personal God? Would not my own work to-day, simple as it is, gain not only in nobility, but in efficiency also, if I could really give myself to the Master before I dare to lift my hands to the work? "Mary," "Rabboni." That is all I need—to hear my own name breathed by the Voice of God and to cry with the worshipping penitent of Magdala, "Rabboni, Master."

Meditate on the Divine promise of vocation.

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom My soul delighteth. Thus saith the Lord that created thee, and He that formed thee, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name. Thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain.

III

S. PETER

S. LUKE XXIV. 33, 34. I COR. XV. 5. S. JOHN XXI. 15-19

TO the penitent Magdalene succeeds the penitent Apostle, S. Peter. On that very Easter Day when the two disciples from Emmaus had returned to Jerusalem with their wonderful news of the appearance of Jesus, they were themselves greeted with the happy cry, "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon." Of that first meeting between S. Peter and his risen Lord we are told nothing. The fact of it was well known to the Church. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve."

A.

Reverent fancy can picture the impulsive despair of the eager disciple, confronted now with a double treachery. Not only had he made denial of his Lord in the courtyard of Caiaphas, but he had disbelieved all that had been said of the promised Resurrection. If no one else could have been found to sustain the broken hopes of the bewildered

disciples, should it not at least have been the part of S. Peter to cheer their flagging hearts with the remembrance of all that the Master had said? He had been chosen by the Master Himself for the most intimate revelations of His ministry. He had been called into closest association with the mind and purpose of Christ. He had marked himself out amongst his fellows as leader in critical moments of danger and anxiety. He had confessed that Jesus was indeed the Christ and that in Him alone were the words of eternal life. Yet now in the hour of utmost need, when the truth of those words was put to the question, when the faith of his companions was shattered by the tragedy of the Cross, the leader himself had failed more utterly than they all. In the inspiring Presence of his Master S. Peter felt himself ready for every service and equal to every danger. Even death itself would not daunt him. But the unexpected surrender of Christ in Gethsemane, the unimagined horrors of the arrest, the trial and the Cross, had swept away all his confidence. He found himself groping, miserable and wretched, in dark uncertainties, which grew more terrible with every day that passed. Would that he had perished by his Master's side! At least there would have been the glory of unbroken loyalty. And the companionship of Jesus, even on the Cross, would have assuaged something of the bitterness of death. But now that oppor-

tunity of faithfulness had passed, and he lay in inglorious hiding, loathing himself for the craven cowardice of his denial, stung with remorse for the undreamed-of treachery.

Startled at the call of Mary of Magdala he had hurried to the sepulchre. Its emptiness only added to his bewilderment. He had searched the very tomb and had come away un comforted. And now to him, bereft of all self-confidence, humbled and full of fear, came Jesus, not to upbraid, but to uplift, not to dismay, but to raise and re-create the fallen leader. And though we know no word of what Christ said, and though we have no record of the mingled shame and gladness that strove for mastery in the Apostle's heart, yet we do know this: we know that Christ's coming to S. Peter was the acceptance of his penitence. We see in this visit of Jesus another signal witness of His self-revelation to the penitent. For from this moment S. Peter began to assume his place of leadership among the Apostles and presently led them forth to Galilee at the Master's bidding. So marked at the very outset is the Lord's approval of penitence as the gateway of the risen Life. There can be no leadership, no certainty of guidance, no voice of authority where there is not the Divine forgiveness. It is God's absolution that recruits and restores, and lays the foundation of new greatness.

Pray for the spirit of true penitence.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Holy and True, pour into my soul the light of Thy Holy Spirit, that I may see my sins. Give me true sorrow, deepen in me true repentance, and quicken my heart and will that I may ardently desire and steadfastly seek all that is holy and good, for Thy sake, O Lord, Who art my Saviour and my merciful God.

B.

This meeting with Jesus was the most crucial moment in the history of S. Peter. Other landmarks there were in the story of his life which could never be forgotten—the impulsive response to the call of his brother Andrew, the welcome of penetrating insight and love with which Jesus received him, the outspoken confession of faith which brought such joy to the heart of the Master, the broken loyalty and repeated denial in the courtyard of the high priest, the vision of Christ dead upon the Cross. But none of these were of such vital moment as this call of the risen Lord. Yet no word remains of all that Jesus said. The solemn secrecy of that first meeting of the shamed Apostle with the risen Lord of Love remains inviolate. A sacred reticence prevails where the deepest spiritual experience of the soul is touched. The reality, the fulness, the intensity of that profound experience must be

read in the changed spirit of the life that followed. Changes in the heart of S. Peter, radical and deep, which three years of fellowship with Jesus had not yet been able to effect, were achieved in the silence of that intercourse with the risen Saviour. The hour which Jesus had foretold was come. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." It is the conversion of S. Peter. He turns from self to God, from doubt to faith, from ease to sacrifice. He is ready now to strengthen his brethren. Through more than thirty years of steadfast leadership, with all its varied labour, suffering and toil, it must have been to this moment that S. Peter ever looked back as the crisis of his life, when in the humble fervour of a true contrition he gave himself to the Call of the Lord.

And with us, too, the moments of our deepest spiritual experience must be the moments of silence. Over the most profound intimacies of the soul with Christ a veil of secrecy must ever be drawn. That which is most real can least endure to be expressed in word. The delicate bloom of spiritual beauty is quickly spoiled by the rude breath of speech. The most profound events in our spiritual life are those which we treat with sacred reserve. It cannot be unknown to others that we have this holy intercourse with Jesus. For our lives are changed and the reality of those inner experiences is witnessed

by the new beauty and strength which fellowship with Christ bestows. But the secret of those moments of fellowship remains our own. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." There are secrets which we are asked to share with Jesus alone.

But we know the temptation to break through that sacred reserve. Shallow natures there are, which are ready to speak glibly of the most holy intimacies of the soul. If we have realised the closeness of Christ's fellowship, if we have revered rightly the sanctity of His approach, the instinctive delicacy of true love for Him will make us guard the door of our lips. The Spirit of Holy Fear will keep us from irreverent speaking of holy things. Times there are, of course, when, in word as well as in deed, we must bear witness to the reality of our deepest spiritual life. But we shall ask the Spirit's guidance when to speak. We must be convinced that we are speaking for Christ's sake only, not for our own glory or satisfaction. There are friendships in spiritual things which justify a sacred interchange of the most intimate experiences of the soul. But these must be entered upon only in the spirit of prayer. It is the secret of Jesus Himself which we are opening to others, and His

honour must be safely guarded. S. Peter will be ready to bear his bold witness for Christ when the Master calls, and will proclaim faithfully and fully the reality of those intimacies of the soul with Jesus, which fellowship with Him in life and sacrament bestows. But both Jesus before the other disciples, and S. Peter before his converts, observed the secret of that great moment of divine Absolution.

It is this reverent spirit of reticence and reserve which makes us treasure the moments of silence after every Communion. In the quiet hush as we kneel still before the Altar, we seek to make real to ourselves the great experience of Christ's coming. Deeper even than our poor consciousness can grasp is the reality of that fellowship with Jesus. But as we ponder upon it and give ourselves faithfully to its influence, its sacredness lays a new claim upon our lives and its power impels us to new service. We go forth into the world, as Christ-bearers, quickened with a new and vital experience of God, pledged to a reverent and holy witness to the power of that Presence, Whose very secrecy in the soul is the guarantee of its abiding reality and power.

Pray for the Spirit of Holy Fear.

O Holy Spirit of God, Fount of holiness and truth, implant in my heart the gift of Holy Fear, that I may realise the sanctity of holy things. Guard Thou the door of my lips and keep me from all

irreverence of thought and word and deed. Enable me to keep close to Christ that I may live in the fellowship of His love, and quicken Thou me in His ways, O Lord, Thou Giver of Life.

C.

It was very characteristic of the delicate and penetrating insight of Jesus that He had at once sought out S. Peter, and had chosen a moment of private intercourse in which to assure him of his Master's trust and forgiveness. When the disciples knew that Jesus had shewn Himself to S. Peter alone, they recognised at once that he had been restored and forgiven. They must have looked for some sign that they might be able to trust him as before. And now Jesus had given them a sign of His approval, and S. Peter began to take his old place among them again. But Jesus yet waited for an occasion when He might publicly and openly, in the presence of his fellow-Apostles, give S. Peter an opportunity of witnessing to his loyalty and of receiving from the hands of his Master a new commission. His fall had been an act of open disloyalty, his restoration should be equally open and authoritative. After the first appearances of the risen Christ at Jerusalem, the Apostles moved to Galilee again under the leadership of S. Peter. Still Jesus had made no public recognition of the

individual work and mission of S. Peter. It was as though Christ waited for him to regain his old position of pre-eminence among his fellows in the most natural way upon the lake, before He confirmed his spiritual leadership by a definite public commission. S. Peter had gone back to the Sea of Galilee and had resumed the familiar fishing with his old partners upon the lake, awaiting the promised call. It may be that those days were meant to be days of trial, in which S. Peter was to prove whether the fascination of the old habits of life upon the lake was stronger than the call of new-found loyalty. There was no hesitation in S. Peter's choice. No sooner was the Master recognised upon the shore than S. Peter threw himself into the water to come to Jesus. In the presence of the risen Lord, what place was there for fishing? His impulsive action was symbolic of his new devotion.

And Jesus used that moment to ratify his call and to restore him publicly in the presence of his brethren to the work of the Apostolate. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." The two great requisites in the life of one who would work for Christ are love and humility. Christ would give the Apostle an opportunity of shewing that he had left behind his eager self-

confidence and had outgrown his old habit of extravagant promise. And at the same time by the solemn emphasis of the word which He used for love, Jesus pointed to the deep-seated character and deliberate resolve of that devotion of the soul which in the name of love God asks of men. Thus straightly and simply challenged, S. Peter can no longer protest that his love for Jesus is greater than that of his brethren. Indeed, he will not dare even to call it love in the sense in which Jesus uses the term. He will not claim for himself that deep love of deliberate and steadfast choice, that whole-hearted devotion and adoring submission of soul, of which the Master speaks. He can only throw himself upon the infinite knowledge of Christ and protest humbly that at least he loves Him truly with all the sincerity of natural friendship and affection. The repeated questions of Jesus cannot move the Apostle from his lowlier claim. But that is enough for Jesus to accept. He is satisfied with the utter truthfulness and simplicity of that affection. Here is a foundation rock, firm and true, upon which He can build. Here is the heart of a pastor. "Feed My sheep."

There is only one real and lasting basis for ministerial work—the love of Jesus. For all fruitful service of God there must be the motive and inspiration of love. At a great moment in his life S. Peter had witnessed to the reality and

power of his faith, and at his words Jesus had given thanks to God for the glorious Vision of the Church, which, founded upon this rock, was to triumph everlastingly. But S. Peter could not sustain his faith at that high level. It was a flash of inspired vision which many a moment of faithless bewilderment and shrinking anxiety seemed to belie. Indeed, faith cannot be perfected without love. And it was the true love which was wanting. S. Peter loved activity, loved success and happiness, and was ready to give himself without stint for the practical attainment of his eager ideals. But the ideals were his and not Christ's. His faith was faith in himself. He had not yet the love which made him distrust self and see all things with the eyes of the Beloved. Unselfish, disinterested love had yet to be born in him, before even faith could be brought to perfection. Faith is the condition of love, and itself comes to fulfilment when it is crowned by love. It was this love, completing faith and giving it stability and permanence, which Jesus sought in His Apostle as the pledge and guarantee of effective and abiding service.

Love is indeed the secret of all faithful ministry. True it is that in the service of the priesthood Christ works without any uncertainty through the grace of Orders and of Sacraments. The priest who is validly ordained ministers valid sacraments of grace. But alike for priest and for people, for the full proof

of every ministry there must be the love of Jesus as the spring of all endeavour and the end of all ambition. The priest who by the official acts of his sacred ministry is daily feeding souls with the food of immortality may himself become a castaway, if there is not in his heart a growing personal devotion to our Blessed Lord. The soul that frequents the sacraments is misusing opportunities, neglecting to develop the gifts of grace and losing something of the power of the sacraments, if there is not a growing love of Jesus. For at the Altar it is not holiness alone, not efficiency, not safety, but Jesus Himself that we seek, that we may love Him more and more as we live upon the sacraments of His Love. It is upon this love that the life of the Christian is built.

S. Peter will not claim to surpass the other Apostles in love. He will not compare himself at all with others. He throws himself on the certain knowledge of the Master. "Thou knowest that I love Thee." And Christ, Who reads the hearts of men and knows us better than we know ourselves, saw the love that was stirring in the heart of His disciple and accepted it as the basis of His commission, "Feed My sheep." It must be love of Christ alone that enables us for ministry, for the sheep that we feed are not ours, but His. "My sheep." Those whom we serve we must love in Christ, because they are His. We must try to see

them as Christ sees them—with His divine hopefulness and unfailing faith. Always they are objects of love. And wonderfully did S. Peter fulfil the hopes of Jesus. It was love that gave him courage for his first bold witness in Jerusalem, it was love that clothed him with humility, it was love that made him willingly accept suffering as part of the imitation of Christ, it was love that led him forth to the death of glorious martyrdom at Rome, witnessing bravely for the Master in the very capital of the world.

And the spirit of S. Peter is the spirit in which we accept our work from God. Our belief is that Christ knows us better than we know ourselves. He reads the hidden longings, the secret aspirations that stir beneath the hideous failures of our life. He knows the repeated struggles, the brave endeavours that end so often only in defeat. Beneath all that looks to human eyes so unloving, so unfaithful, so disloyal and so mean, Christ sees the true love that only seeks to grow in holiness and power. "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." That is the cry with which we commit ourselves once more to the risen Lord for ministry and service. And in trustful response Jesus calls us to our work for Him, "Feed My sheep," enabling us with power for His high mission.

Pray for faithful obedience to Christ's call.

O Almighty God, Who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy Apostle Saint Peter many excellent gifts and commandedst him earnestly to feed Thy flock ; Make, we beseech Thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach Thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV

EMMAUS

S. LUKE XXIV. 13-35. S. MARK XVI. 12, 13

ALREADY the afternoon of the first Easter Day had come and yet the Apostles had no clear knowledge of the Resurrection. "Idle tales" had reached them from the Holy Women. S. Peter and S. John had even seen the empty tomb, "but Him they saw not." Many followers of Christ had gathered at Jerusalem for the Passover in expectation of the coming Kingdom, and had waited after the Crucifixion until that "third day" of which the Master had spoken in words of such mysterious hope. No wonder that now they began to melt away, leaving the Holy City in sad bewilderment. They had been ready to venture all, and their hopes had been so rudely frustrated.

A.

In some such mood of disappointment Cleopas and his friend made their way out of Jerusalem, hoping to reach the village of Emmaus by night-

fall. And to them Jesus chose to reveal Himself that Easter Day. These two disciples were not of the chosen Twelve. They represented that outer band of followers whose hearts had been stirred by the gracious words and mighty deeds of the Prophet of Nazareth and who were ready at the first clear call to follow Christ. The Gospels tell us very little of this band of expectant disciples whom Jesus had gradually gathered round Him in the course of His ministry. It is from these that the hundred and twenty "names" were recruited, who after the Ascension formed the nucleus of the infant Church. It was the presence of so many whose hearts were already touched by the appeal of Christ, that made it possible for S. Peter's first words on the day of Pentecost to come home effectually to three thousand souls.

This manifestation of Jesus to these two disciples lifts the veil of His individual care for the most lowly of His followers. It is not only to the Twelve that He makes His self-disclosure. Wherever there are faithful, eager hearts, wherever there are earnest souls in distress of faith, there is the loving care of Jesus. The marvellous growth of the Church in its first days was surely due to the convinced response of ardent faith and glowing love, which the hearts of so many unknown and lowly disciples made to the realised love of the Saviour. Pride of place and dignity of office bring no special privilege

of divine revelation in the Church of God. Christ loves each soul with a love that is infinite and bestows upon each the same tender care. And upon the steadfast witness of the humblest of His disciples Jesus relies for the spread of His gospel. He spares no pains upon the training of each separate soul. No revelation of which we are capable is ever denied to the very least of us all. As we go on our way in sadness and perplexity, bewildered with the seeming reversal of all our hopes and the apparent failure of so many promises of divine achievement, Jesus meets us, and taking us just as we are in our simple ignorance and blindness of vision, leads us step by step to a new experience of faith and lively hope, until with our own eyes we see the risen Lord in our midst and take joy in the certainty of His abiding Presence. Only we must be true to all we have already learned and cling to the glory of discipleship. In an age above all, when few men stand out as pre-eminently great among their fellows and the genius of leadership seems wanting, we must believe that God sets a special store upon the faithfulness of the many, and looks even to ourselves for special witness and example.

Meditate upon the consecration of your own service at the call of the Lord.

Think of what you have yet to learn of self-dedication in the service of God. Recall the gifts

which God has given you—health, activity, enthusiasm, the love of goodness, ideals of what is noble and beautiful, sympathy, endurance—gifts of leadership and influence, of charm and attractiveness. How far have they been used definitely in the service of Christ and of His Church? Think of the friends who lean upon you for affection and guidance. Have you helped them to love Jesus, have you guided them towards God, have you led them to find happiness in the worship of the Church, have you taught them to seek strength in the sacraments? Think of your powers of life, growing newly with each day's experience. Is each new gift of knowledge and of strength used to enrich your life of prayer? Is it recognised as God's gift to you, preparing you for higher service? Will you let your daily life bear witness to what you are at your best? Will you meet difficulties in the spirit of faith, saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"?

B.

"We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." There are few of us who have not at some time trodden the very way of disappointment along which these two disciples passed. We have started work for God with such high hopes. In very definite ways we have been led to expect the intervention of God. We have looked for evident success. The redemption of Israel seemed so sure, so near. Then failure has

dashed all our hopes. In the Church which we trusted to be the home of unity and truth and peace, discord and controversy have revealed sad dissensions, and the voice of authority which we thought so clear has been difficult to discern. In the State which we hoped was Christian there has been no attempt to live up to the ideals of Christ or to legislate on the basis of obedience to His declared Will. In the experience of our own life there has been so little attainment of all the happiness and victory and peace which were promised us in Christ Jesus. Again and again we are thrust rudely back upon ourselves, dazed at the powerlessness of God in human life, ready to question the reality of all our happiest experience.

Jesus Himself suggests the true remedy for such moments of perplexity. We must tell Him. We must pray. That is the secret. Our prayer has failed. We have not told Jesus. For to tell Jesus is the way to revelation. Prayer means not only a God Who listens, but a God Who reveals. Prayer is vision. In prayer all the interests and experiences of life are lifted up into the light of God. We see them as they are in the sight of God, with the light of eternity streaming upon them. Prayer is Jesus teaching, as well as Jesus hearing. For in prayer we have the guidance of the Spirit of God, Who, as we tell out our story to Jesus, recalls to our minds the very words of Jesus Himself, enabling

us to see the meaning which hitherto has escaped us, to recall the truth which we have neglected, to correct the impression which has deceived us. Prayer opens to us afresh the revelation of God and attunes our ears anew to the voice of Christ. Our hearts burn and glow with the fire of conviction. For as in "the heavenly places" of prayer we bring ourselves once more into touch with the deepest experiences of our soul in its closest relationship to God, there is stirred within us a new apprehension of all that God has already revealed to us and a sense of communion with God, which revivifies faith and restores to us confidence in the truth of His promises. Thus prayer anticipates and supersedes the slower processes of logic and of reasoned thought. Contact with God immediately gives us a certainty and peace which can afterwards be justified by calm reflection and deliberate thought, but which can never first be gained by unaided reason. What God requires is truthfulness and reality in our attitude of prayer. We must tell Him just what we are. We may not indeed realise all that He is. Our eyes may be holden. But our very earnestness will be the guarantee of our truth. We speak of that which is the one interest of our life. We have no other hope. We have ventured all here. Prayer is not day-dreaming, nor castle-building, but truth-telling. And upon truth God can build securely. Yet how often in our prayers we are

living in a world of unrealities. High sentiment and emotional ecstasy, poetic imaginings and pretty symbolism—do not these sometimes take the place of that stern reality and hard fact which are the real issues with which God can deal? Not that prayer is not poetry. Prayer is indeed the flower of spiritual poetry, breathing the fragrance of all that is most beautiful in the life of the soul. Prayer is the romance of the soul, but it is the romance which God weaves out of reality, the poetry which God beats out of life. There is one way out of all despair, one balm for all agony of soul—to tell Jesus.

Pray for the spirit of prayer.

O Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Eternal Son of God Most High, Whom truly to know is everlasting life, grant us so perfectly to know and to trust Thee, that we may give ourselves to Thee in unceasing prayer. May the Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts that we may unburden our souls to Thee in penitence and faith, may praise Thee for Thy mercies, may adore Thee in Thy Majesty, and lifting up holy hands may call upon Thee in all dangers and necessities, Who art with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God world without end.

C.

“And their eyes were opened and they knew Him and He vanished out of their sight.” In love they had constrained Jesus to abide. As the darkness

fell without, the Light of the World crossed the threshold of that simple home, and in the familiar breaking of the bread the heavenly Guest was made known to the faithful hearts of His disciples. Faith had been kindled out of the very embers of despair. The eyes of the soul were opened now, and Cleopas gazed with joyful reverence at the Master Whom he had so lately mourned. Wonderful beyond all expectation was the manner of His appearing. Never in all their hopes had the two friends dreamed of such a possibility as this. That He would redeem Israel by might of sword and holiness of deed, that He would reign victoriously as King and sway the world in righteousness and peace—this had been their splendid hope. But that He Who had died the death of shame upon the Cross should rise triumphant from the grave, and in the spiritual glory of the Body of the Resurrection should manifest Himself once more to His disciples in the intimacies of daily life—this was an experience beyond all imagining. Yet there was no shadow of doubt. Their eyes were no longer holden. He Who held the key to those wonderful prophecies of old, Who had cast the light of revelation so clearly upon dark symbol and forgotten type in the Scriptures, was the very One Who had spoken with authority and not as the scribes, Whose Voice had stilled the waves and healed the sick and called Lazarus from the tomb, Who had said that

He Himself would rise the third day from the dead. The conviction was unassailable. He stood before them in the full reality of His risen Manhood. The Christ Who had suffered had entered into His glory. It was the new birth of Faith. Jesus was alive. In Him life took on a new value. The world was changed because of Him. The vision of Jesus was the opening to their eyes of a whole world of new spiritual realities. No longer did they need the outward assurance of His visible companionship. It was enough that they knew that He lived and was the Master of the souls of men. The need of faith did not end with the revelation of His Presence. Rather was the revelation a call to new and fuller faith. He would not satisfy their love with any abiding vision, but vanishing out of their sight at the very moment of recognition He challenged them to a more profound exercise of faith. And that is ever the way of divine revelation. No manifestation of God can ever take away the need of faith. Each fresh disclosure of God deepens human faith and makes new demands upon our trust in Him. Faith can never really be lost in sight, either in this world or the next. The revelation of the Infinite to the finite must always necessitate faith on man's part in his intercourse with God. Faith is the glory of the creature in his attitude towards the Creator. Love does not annul faith, but rather completes and stabilises it.

So is it always with God's varied revelations of Himself to us in this life. Each revelation is a call to deeper faith. Faith rises with each new vision to greater heights and finds more spacious regions for its exercise. Here is the trial of faith. We are prone to expect that when God gives us each new disclosure of Himself, faith will be satisfied, and the moment of sight at last has come, and we may rest in open vision. But the experience of the greatest saints teaches us otherwise. The result of revelation is more food for faith. Faith, enriched and assured by each fresh experience of God, is to be lifted up to new endeavours, to be carried up to higher ranges of flight, to make more daring ventures, to apprehend realities yet more spiritual and divine. Jesus makes Himself known. There is the gladness of vision which rewards our longing eyes. But then, because now we know Him and recognition is complete, He vanishes from our sight, calling us to follow Him with the untiring energies of quickened faith into new spheres of fuller fellowship and spiritual glory. Faith is realised not merely in the hidden activities of the soul, but in the outward relations of our life. It was the pulsing certainty of faith that urged the two disciples back upon the way to Jerusalem that they might share their joy with their brethren. With us, too, faith leads to action and impels us to immediate witness. And there are few more effective ways of

deepening and stablishing faith than by bringing to other souls the joy that God has brought to us. When Christ makes Himself known to us in the great Breaking of the Bread, we shall realise that it is not only the Call of the Lord to deeper personal apprehension of His hidden and invisible glory in the power of a faith which He has enriched by His sacramental Presence, but also the call of the Saviour to a new missionary activity of service which shall lead others to the vision of His Love.

Pray for Faith that grows with each fresh revelation of God.

Almighty God, glorious in wisdom and power, Who hast revealed to us Thy Love through the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ, grant that day by day our eyes may see the King in His beauty, and that looking unto Jesus and beholding in Him the brightness of Thy glory, we may go from faith to faith, and reaching forth unto those things which are before may press on toward the mark for the prize of Thy high calling in Christ Jesus, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God for ever and ever.

V

THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

S. LUKE XXIV. 36-48. S. JOHN XX. 19-23

THE two disciples hurrying back from Emmaus to Jerusalem came at length in the dark of the evening to the house in which the Apostles were gathered. The doors were shut and barred as they had left them earlier in the day, for there was still reason to fear the hostility of the Jewish leaders. Arrests might yet be attempted. The followers of the Crucified were still watched. At any moment the fury of the priests or the people might break in upon their peace. The two disciples had left the little company in gloom and bewilderment. They found them radiant with glad excitement, raised to new hopes by the undoubted appearance of Jesus to S. Peter. And these hopes were quickened by the story which they also had to tell of the manifestation of the risen Lord to them at Emmaus. Hardly had they finished the graphic story of their experience when the very Presence of Which they had been speaking was revealed before their eyes. "As

they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." Terror fell upon them as they beheld that familiar Figure in their very midst. The doors were still shut. But Jesus stood there before them in all the vigour of life, inviting them to assure themselves that it was He. "Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." And they looked with awe upon the print of the nails in His sacred Hands and Feet. And as they gazed, awe gave way to overpowering joy. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

A.

Who can picture the wonder of that scene? Jesus, the forsaken Master, the crucified Leader, the beloved Friend restored to those who had mourned Him as dead, who had lost hope in His sovereignty and doubted His promises. He came, the Messenger of Peace, to hearts that had been troubled with most exquisite fears. He came to call them once more to Himself, to repeat in tones of new authority, in terms of new power, the call to personal service and obedience to the Will of the Father.

So it is that Jesus comes to us with the message of Peace and the mission of service. No doors can

shut Him out. No barriers are too strong for Him to break. Fear may paralyse the soul, difficulties may oppress, doubts may terrify and foes may threaten. But Jesus comes. And with His coming peace falls upon the life, the peace that passes understanding, the peace to men of goodwill that is the very promise of the Incarnation. For He comes as the risen Lord of power, the Victor over death and over sin. And the peace of a great surrender comes to us as we commit our weak and wayward wills to the strong keeping of His triumphant Love. As then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, so He pours into our souls the peace of illumination, kindling the light of new revelation, making clear God's eternal purpose for us, throwing the light of His victory upon the dark pathway of our lives. In Him, the risen Conqueror, we see One Who is stronger than the strong man, Who assures to us the peace of divine protection. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan." We shall not be free from conflict, but we can fight in the spirit of assured victory. The foe may not yet be beaten, but he has lost his sway over our imagination, he no longer fascinates our will. We rest in the power of the risen Lord, Who manifests Himself afresh to us and assures us that Satan is a beaten, discredited foe, and that the peace of divine forgiveness waits to bless the soul that forsakes sin in the power of the Resurrection,

and stays itself upon its God. Refreshed indeed in the multitude of peace is the soul that is thus assured of fellowship with God through the risen and victorious Humanity of Jesus Christ. It is this gift of Peace with which God starts us upon our work for Him. Enabled by His grace, we have the peace, not of idleness and inactive repose, but of effective energy, of harmonious and untiring activity, of sufficiency for all our tasks. It is the very Peace of God Himself Who works ever in the tranquil bliss of a patient and perpetual calm. May this very God of peace sanctify us wholly as we give ourselves without fear to the Call of the Lord.

Pray for the gift of Peace.

Remember, O Lord, the peace of Thy one, only, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Grant that all peoples may be refreshed in the multitude of peace. Grant to us the peace that is from heaven, and the peace of this life also bestow upon us graciously, that all our ways may be ordered in safety. To every soul that is oppressed give mercy, give rest, give help, give peace. O God of peace, sanctify us wholly and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life, for His sake Who is the Prince of Peace, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

B.

“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” This is the Mission for which the divine Peace

prepared the hearts of the Apostles. The work of Jesus is not completed. His Mission is not yet exhausted. In words which never failed in certainty and clearness, Jesus had declared the work of His Life to be the fulfilling of the Mission which His Father had given Him. "He that sent Me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. He that sent Me is with Me. The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him. I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." That mission is to seek and to save the world that is lost. Death has not annulled that mission. The Resurrection in itself has not fulfilled it. The eager love that drew the Saviour to the Cross still urged Him on to the fulfilment of His redemptive work. A new stage in the development of that work began with the Resurrection. The Sacred Humanity of Jesus, which God had chosen as the divine instrument of man's redemption, having passed through all the experiences of life, sinless and perfect, and having triumphed over death, must now pass on to the fuller glories of the Ascension, in the power of which the limitations of the life of this visible world shall be transcended, and a new condition of spiritual glory shall be attained which will make it the ever-communicable source of eternal life. The stage of His own personal visible ministry on earth is finished. But in

the powers of His consummated Manhood He will yet act toward the world through the agency of His Church. His Apostles shall be lifted up to share in the very Mission which the Father gave Him to accomplish. They shall represent Him to the world as He had represented the Father. As the Father had sent Him, so would He send the Apostles. They were to be actually identified with Him in the reality and power of His ministry. No words could emphasise more clearly the solemn character of that divine mission. They were called to share in the very commission of Christ Himself. The secret of those years of jealous training and loving friendship was revealed. It was the preparation of the disciples to share in His divine mission. When the visible Presence of Jesus should be withdrawn, He would yet live on in the Society which thus He founded. The very work which He had begun should now be carried to perfection by the ministry of the Church. The Church was commissioned with the plenitude of His divine power. The power which the Church wielded would be the power of God Himself. We may wonder at the human frailty and weakness of the instruments which Christ chose to carry on His work. Their lowliness and imperfection may hide from us the divine authority with which they were clothed. But it is no new wonder. It is just the wonder of the Incarnation itself. God chooses the weak and the lowly in this world to

confound the wise and the great. We have the divine treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of power may be of God and not of us. And history shews that we can set no limits to the glorifying and enabling power of God in human life. Christ would not send His Apostles to their work till they were endued with power from on high. So on that first Easter night Jesus declared to His disciples the glory for which they had been prepared. They were to become participators with Him in His Mission. What that should mean, there would be the instruction and the experience of the great Forty Days to reveal.

The Mission of the Church is the Mission of Christ. And the life of the Church reproduces all the characteristics of the Incarnate Life of Christ. We can understand the persecution, the failures, the weaknesses, the hindrances, the suffering of the Church when we recall the experiences of the Incarnate Himself. Just as the Magi with eyes of faith could see beneath the lowly form of the little Infant in the poverty of Bethlehem the very King Whom they were come to worship, so we cannot fail beneath all the limitations and infirmities of Church life to see the hidden glory of the Incarnate Christ. The power of the Church is the power of Christ. The suffering of the Church is the suffering of Christ, and the victory of Christ is the victory of His Church. Upon the fulness of that victory we are

not yet entered, but the power of the Resurrection is the energy of daily renewal by which the Church repeats in its earthly warfare the triumph of the risen Christ. If the Church shares in the loneliness of the Incarnate, it is also instinct with His sovereign power and assured of divine victory. The conditions of the Church's warfare change from age to age. But for the needs of each crisis the power of Christ manifested in His Church will ever be adequate. There is no faithlessness so paralysing to the energy of Christian life and hope as the forgetfulness of the divine mission and divine authority of the Church. "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed. God shall help her and that right early." That is the confidence which inspires us to fruitful activity and to patient, hopeful and glad service. It is no blind confidence, for the history of the Church throughout the ages has shewn us that, however great the peril and however tyrannous the powers of evil, the victory has ever been with that Church of Christ against which neither hell nor death can prevail.

Pray for the Church that its witness may be faithful in times of adversity.

O God, Who hast promised that Thou wilt never be absent from Thy Church unto the end of the world, and that the gates of hell and of death shall not prevail against it, graciously make Thy strength perfect in our weakness and shew the

might of Thy divine promise, that we, jealously guarding the faith and steadfastly living in holiness, may cleave to Thee in the ways of grace and may be safe under the protection of Thy Presence, now and ever.

C.

“ He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” The Church of Christ was to be instinct with the life of God. Even as at the first creation of man it was the Breath of God that made him a living soul, so now into this body of re-created Manhood must be breathed the very Breath of undying and eternal life from the Lips of the risen Lord. To Him in the truth of His perfect Humanity belonged the fulness of the Spirit. To Him was given the Spirit without measure. “ As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” The Mission of the Father can only be fulfilled in the power of the Spirit. The Human Nature which Jesus took as the instrument of man’s redemption was conceived by the Holy Ghost. At His Baptism He received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, not merely for Himself, as His public designation to the supreme work of Prophet, Priest and King, but for our sakes also, that from the Spirit-filled treasury of His sacred Humanity He might pour out the

Spirit upon us who are called into fellowship with Him. And in the power of the Spirit all the acts of His Ministry were fulfilled. What He had begun in the Spirit must be carried on in the Spirit also. The Spirit of God, mediated by the Incarnate in Whom He dwells in the plenitude of divine power, must be the inspiration of the Body through which Christ was to continue His redemptive work. The fulness of that Gift could not yet be given, "because Jesus was not yet glorified." The Humanity of Jesus had not yet attained that fulness of spiritual glory which the Spirit had still to communicate to it at the Ascension. Only then from the fully glorified and ascended Humanity of Christ could the destined outpouring of the Spirit be effectually bestowed. But already at His first meeting with His Apostles, Jesus would prepare them for the fulness of that gift. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." As He breathed upon them, He not only designated them formally as those who should carry on the work of the Spirit which He had begun, but He imparted to them a first gift of the Spirit, conveying to them a personal consecration, a quickening of vision, an illumination of will, a spiritual energy, which should enable them to use aright the great days of preparation, beyond which there waited the plenitude of the Holy Spirit's power for the life-giving ministries to which they were called.

And with the first gift of the Spirit, Christ de-

clared the authority with which the Church should be endowed. As the work of the Church was to extirpate sin and to win the world to holiness in the power of the risen Lord and of His Holy Spirit, Christ entrusted it with that authority over sin which He Himself had exercised upon earth. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." If the Church could not have authority to deal effectually with sin, to bind and to loose, to retain and to remit, there would be no continuation of the work of Christ, Who came to beat down Satan under our feet. But the mission of the Church is the very mission of Christ. The Church with its sacraments and ministry is not something apart from Christ which comes between the soul and its Saviour, but it is the very Body of Christ Himself Who touches us with His own Hand and blesses us with His own Lips, and takes us up into His own life in the sacramental ministries of His Church.

The thought of Christ and His activities toward mankind is incomplete without the thought of His Church. In all the sacraments of the Church, the ministration of which has been so jealously guarded by the Apostles and their divinely commissioned successors, Christ Himself comes to each individual soul, and deals with us, not as lonely isolated individuals, but as those who, being united to Him, are thereby lifted out of ourselves into fellowship with others. The very mediation of our fellows which,

according to the principle of the Incarnation, God uses for our redemption, is meant to help us to realise the fellowship of the Church in Christ. With God all things are possible. And it would be possible for God to grant the spiritual grace of union with Himself without the intervention of any human agency. It is possible. But it is not God's revealed way. God's normal way of giving grace is through the mediation of our fellows. The mediation does not obscure nor impair the immediacy of God's personal dealing with the soul, but it does emphasise our fellowship one with another in Christ. God does not mean to save us and keep us as elect souls, single and separate, but He saves us as members of one great fellowship, and it is into a corporate life that we are freshly drawn with every gift of sacramental grace. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." Sanctity is the death of all selfishness. Salvation is the life of fellowship.

When the child is taken into the arms of the priest and baptised with water and the Holy Ghost, it is indeed the Church which is exercising the authority given to it by Christ of opening for the souls of men the doors of the kingdom of heaven. And Christ, according to His promise, ratifies its act with the seal of divine fulfilment. For to the eyes of faith it is Christ Himself Who through the external agency of His priest takes the Child up into His own Arms and receives him into the King-

dom of Heaven. It is Christ Who receives him, releases him of his sins, sanctifies him with the Holy Ghost and gives him the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life. Christ alone can deal with the issues of sin, but He deals with them from the very beginning of our human life through the regular agency of His Church. So when later the deepening sense of sin leads us to seek the certainty of divine forgiveness, we shall find it once more in the ministrations of Christ's Church. The treasury of grace which the Church ministers is His, the authority with which the Church speaks is His. Nothing is abated of power or of certainty, although it comes through human channels. It is the very agency of His own creating, and He Himself is acting through it. Thus when we tell out our sins before the priest, who is there not in any individual and personal capacity, but as representative of the Church, we know that we are speaking into the ears of Christ. And the sentence which he gives is the sentence of Christ, whether to remit or to retain. It is Christ Himself Who has dealt with my soul, using the means of certitude which He ordained when He gave His first commission to the Apostles. And again, when we approach the Altar, it is Christ Who is the true Consecrator at every Eucharist. The human priest indeed speaks the words and performs the outward acts which bring Heaven to earth, but what is done on earth is ratified according to His

promise by God in Heaven, and Jesus is with us, drawn to us in the most immediate personal union through the very agency of the sacramental means which He ordained.

Thus it is ever the part of faith to accept the ministries of God's Church in simple obedience and thankfulness, and to see in them the highest fulfilment of the Saviour's promise of abiding Presence with those whom He has come to seek and to save. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Pray for those who minister the sacraments of the Church of Christ.

O Everlasting God, Who art ever adored by the Holy Angels, yet dost choose men to be the stewards of Thy mysteries, bless, we beseech Thee, those whom Thou hast called to the sacred work of holy Ministry in Thy Church, that they who cannot do any good without Thee may by Thee be won to purity and love, and illuminated with a true knowledge of Thy Word and Sacraments, and so being made able ministers of the New Testament, may advance Thy glory and the salvation of Thine elect servants, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer.

VI

S. THOMAS

S. JOHN XX. 24-29

S. THOMAS was not with the others when Jesus came to the Upper Room on the day of the Resurrection. The news which greeted him on his return was too wonderful for him to believe. It passed his understanding. He felt that he must see the risen Lord himself and touch Him, even as the others had done, before he could believe. And Jesus, Who ever stoops in love to the weakness and infirmity of those who truly seek Him, came once more to the Upper Room eight days after, when S. Thomas was now with them, and offered to the eager disciple the very opportunity which he sought. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My Hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." And S. Thomas, yielding himself to the Call of the Lord, "answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." Such was the first adoring confession of His Deity which greeted the risen Lord.

A.

Few indeed are the lines in which the character of S. Thomas is sketched in the Gospels, yet it is impossible to mistake the frank manliness and candour which he displays. In many ways he typifies the average hard-headed, matter-of-fact fisherman of Galilee. It must have been with a very definite expectation of success that he had attached himself to the new religious movement which centred round the Prophet of Nazareth. He had clear ideals. He had high hopes. His was a nature earnestly religious and intense, which had not found satisfaction in the pharisaic formalism or rabbinic teaching of his day. With the ardour of loyal devotion, with impulsive sympathy, and yet in no spirit of blind enthusiasm, he had joined the venture of his comrades and accepted the call of Christ. He had not been one of the earliest disciples. Doubtless he had watched the first experiences of his friends and with the penetration of true insight had quickly realised the unique Personality of the Master, so that at the call of Jesus S. Thomas rose from his work and without misgiving took his place in the inner circle of Christ's followers. And in those first days of the Galilean Ministry all his hopes seemed bounding to a quick fulfilment. Here was all that he expected—activity, enthusiasm,

exciting and crowded days, popular response and every sign of that material success for which his patriotic heart was longing. The withdrawal of Christ from the offered kingship must have been a great disappointment, but, however difficult to understand, S. Thomas felt with S. Peter that Jesus alone had the words of eternal life. The crisis only threw him back upon a closer study of Christ's words and a more determined and deliberate observation of His Person. And with deeper study devotion quickened. S. Thomas was as enthusiastic as S. Peter in readiness to sacrifice himself for the Master's cause. When it was evident that the authorities at Jerusalem were plotting to take Jesus, and that no word of remonstrance, no counsel of caution or delay, could keep Him from going up to Bethany and Jerusalem, it was S. Thomas who urged the brethren to go with Him, even though it were to certain death. "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Where he understood he followed readily. But there were moments when the words of Christ outran his comprehension. Probably of all the disciples there was hardly any one, not even Judas, who was more honestly bewildered than S. Thomas at the scene in the Upper Room at the last Passover. He had expected the pronouncement of a plan of campaign, the happy inauguration of the promised kingdom. Christ was in the midst of His disciples. The moment was propitious for the final

revelation. In the very heart of the Holy City Christ should be enthroned in His kingdom. But at that very moment Jesus spoke of going away. "I go to prepare a place for you. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." It was a bewildering situation. S. Thomas at once grappled with the problem and said frankly, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" The reply of Jesus threw the Apostle back upon the deep mystery of Christ's Personality, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And before he had time to accommodate his thoughts to the more spiritual meaning which so evidently dominated the Master's words at this crisis, the shadow of Death had fallen across the path of the Apostles, and S. Thomas with the rest, lost in bewilderment and surprise, had forsaken Him and fled. Truthfulness up to the limit of understanding, dogged obedience and surrender to known truth, religious earnestness, spiritual insight, enthusiastic loyalty—these were the great characteristics of S. Thomas. The Cross arrested the development of his thought. It seemed as though he were already on the road to vision, when he was confounded by the death of the Master. The Resurrection found him still groping his way up towards the truth. The great hope which was beginning to dawn upon his heart that Jesus was God was too splendid and glorious to believe without

sure confirmation. If Jesus had really risen from the tomb, bearing that very Body once so surely dead upon the Cross, now glorious with the energies of a higher life, then there could be no doubt that He was God. It was for such proof that S. Thomas waited with an eager and loyal heart.

It may be often with ourselves too that the ways of God outstrip our comprehension. We have ideals which have slowly to be corrected by the experience of our lives. Our hearts must be open to the divine instruction. We must be ready to learn the ways of God from the events of our own life. Supreme loyalty to His revealed Will, as we are allowed to know it, will make us worthy of His fuller revelation. If we reverence the Truth, and give up all to follow the Truth as it becomes known to us, God will not fail to stoop to our lowly needs and grant to us such proof as shall satisfy all our doubts and lead us to the risen Saviour with the adoring cry of the Apostle, "My Lord and my God."

Pray for faith.

Almighty and everliving God, Who for the more confirmation of the Faith didst suffer Thy holy Apostle S. Thomas to be doubtful in Thy Son's resurrection, grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reproved.

Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, now and for evermore.

B.

When Jesus came on the first Easter night to shew Himself to all the disciples in the Upper Room, S. Thomas had been absent. It may be that in the eagerness of his hope he had turned his steps towards some investigation of his own, and in the absence of fuller knowledge was following up some clue that he had obtained in his search for news of Jesus. The varying reports of the first appearance of the risen Lord may well have suggested to him some fresh line of enquiry, which took him away at an unusual hour from the assembly of the Brethren. He had returned to find the Apostles overjoyed with the surprising visit of the Lord. It was more than S. Thomas could have hoped. It was too good to believe. No, he could not himself believe it, unless his own eyes and hands could give him actual proof. And so the days passed by, the disciples abating none of their certainty and gladness, S. Thomas withholding his personal assent until he had found the certainty of visible testimony, which could not be gainsaid. He did not separate himself at all from the others. Their certainty remained his hope. If only it could be verified and proved true ! Then after eight days Jesus came again within the shut doors of the Upper Room, displaying the wonder of His divine knowledge by supplying the

very witness which S. Thomas in His absence had demanded. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My Hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side." That Body, risen from the grave, still carried the marks of His Passion. It was indeed Jesus. S. Thomas had made certain of those wounds. They had been to him the sad guarantee of death. Now they were the proof of the identity of life. At once he bowed in adoration before the Master, to Whom his life was so surely devoted. He had thought it all out. If this were indeed He, then indeed He was none other than God. Others might withhold their witness or take time to adjust their views. But S. Thomas was definite and quick of action. He knew what proofs he needed, and they had been given—given in all fulness and reality. With the cry "My Lord, and my God" he worshipped the risen Christ.

The certainty which Jesus gave to S. Thomas He gives equally to us. God does not normally reveal Himself to us by any isolated wonder of glory or brilliant manifestation of power. It is true that there are souls who have been first brought to the realisation of God by some violent catastrophe in nature or some unusual occurrence in human life. By some such lightning-stroke of power God may sometimes flash upon the soul the conviction of His Deity. But that is not the familiar way of God's manifestation. S. Thomas came to the vision of the

risen Christ, prepared by all the experiences of his three years' discipleship. He had walked with Him before he knew He was God. He had enjoyed the intimacies of His friendship, He had listened eagerly to His teaching, He had watched Him as He went in and out on His errands of blessing and mercy. Thus he had learned to trust Him. He had followed Him up to the limits of his understanding. Only at the Cross he had fallen behind. He had not lost trust. But he had lost vision. Through the darkness of his clinging loyalty the story of the Resurrection opened a way of light. But it was an experience too new and too unique to be credible, except on evidence the most clear and most unmistakable. As soon as Jesus gave Himself to his touch, conviction broke upon him and he worshipped.

So it is that belief is not forced upon us to-day either by striking acts of almighty power or by the incontrovertible logic of complete demonstration, apart from the preparation of personal experience. Men walk with Jesus before they know He is God. They drink in the lore of His teaching, they move in the atmosphere of His love as they see Him reflected in the lives and experience of those who follow Him. There is an unconscious preparation of the heart, an awakening of moral sympathy, a kindling of hope in Him, before the final proof which God offers can bring conviction. It is the task of the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Fellow-

ship, to effect the link between the soul and God, which prepares the way for final belief. Proofs converge along manifold lines of evidence to meet in the great truth of the Deity of Jesus. But no proof carries the certainty needed, not merely for intellectual belief, but for moral obedience and surrender, unless it can appeal to that hidden sense of fellowship, that inner hope, that unrealised aptitude for God, which is the ground of every religious experience. The difficulties of belief are more frequently moral than intellectual. Conduct reacts upon creed quite as surely as creed shapes conduct. We may be sure in all our intellectual difficulties that where the will is set towards moral obedience to righteousness and conformity to the holy law of Christ, God will provide such proofs as shall satisfy all our hopes of His Deity, and bring our whole life into worshipful adoration of Jesus, the risen Lord. Two things only are needed, definiteness and decision. We must be quite sure along what lines we need proof. We must not drift in continual suspense. For S. Thomas decision was vital. He sought it eagerly. He found it reverently. It came as the crown of faithful discipleship. It brought the fulness of immediate surrender. It cast the light of revelation upon all that had been dark, and through all the days to come God shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.

So will it be for us. God has an answer for all our doubts. Only let us be true to the deepest experiences of heart and life, and here in this world God will give us certainty if we seek it. He will enable us to respond faithfully to the Call of the Lord and to know the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

Pray for preparedness of heart and for capacity of fuller belief in Jesus.

Lord Jesus, Eternal Word of God, Who art the Way, the Truth and the Life, Who hast promised that the pure in heart shall see God, grant to us purity of heart and obedience to the ways of holiness, that we may give ourselves without hindrance to the revelation of Thy Truth. Bestow upon us abundantly the gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge, that in the power of the Spirit we may be filled with the knowledge of Thy Will, and though we see Thee not, yet believing, may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, through Thy merits, Who art our only Mediator and Advocate.

C

“My Lord and my God.” The words of S. Thomas express the spirit of adoration which marks the believing life. The soul that truly believes gives itself to thankful praise of the beauty and glory of God. By meditation upon the greatness of God Himself we are lifted out of the selfishness of our

own natural instincts into that sense of the divine claim upon our lives which makes us ready to give all to Him. Jesus is not only Lord and God. He is *my* Lord and *my* God. We do not think of Him merely in the terms of His universal glory, but in His own personal and intimate relation to ourselves. He is Sovereign of the world. But it is enough for the conduct of my life that He is Sovereign of my soul. To think of Him as Lord is to acknowledge not only His Mastery, but His protection, His enabling power, His sufficiency for our needs. To move about our tasks with the confession of S. Thomas in our hearts is to make life one long melody of praise and service. It is to have a foretaste of the adoring ministries of Heaven. We know that Heaven rings with the glad melody of the Saints. Not only do those heavenly courts re-echo the loud Alleluias of the redeemed, not only do the praises of the Blessed mingle with the songs of the angelic hosts, but the very lives of the Saints, their adoration, their happy obedience, their supreme delight in God are a perpetual melody and music which gladdens the Heart of the Eternal. Fulness of joy is in the presence of God, and to take part in the praises of the Blessed before the Throne is one of our most treasured hopes. But the saintly life which stirs to the melody of the Eternal need not be only the hope of years to come. It may be, it must be, our present possession, the prized reality of our

earthly experience. Even in this loud, stunning tide of human care and crime there are those with whom the melodies abide of the everlasting chime. "My Lord, my God." Ever the Saint carries this music in his heart, the music of worship and of praise. He knows that from his Lord and his God come all the joys of his life. Baptism lifts him first into the chorus of worship, as the Holy Spirit of glory and of joy takes him for His own. Confirmation gives him new themes of praise, as he rejoices in the quickening of all his powers with the gift of ghostly strength. Throwing himself happily into the sternest conflicts of life, he sings as he fights, and finds joy in the very heat and strain of the battle. Eucharist after Eucharist finds him saying "My Lord and my God," as he is refreshed with the glad and radiant powers of the glorified Humanity of the victorious King of Saints. Where can there be any moment in the progress of such a life which has not its own experience of present joy? Doubtless on earth a broken music, a stifled melody at times. But already here, in secret prayer and aspiration, the holy strain wells up in the sanctuary of our souls, and amid all the wrangling and noise of life reaches the listening ears of the Eternal—"My Lord and my God." That is the song of faith eternally. The discords and the failures here are the promises of harmony and triumph which the fulness of the days shall bring. No single note of that divine music, uttered

with whatever imperfections here, but shall sound on eternally, attuned to the perfect harmonies of heaven. Not only are we cheered by the glad chorus of praise which rises from the spirits of just men made perfect, but we ourselves, as we pass along the hard pilgrim way towards the abiding city, have already the privilege of song, and may raise our eager hymns of thankfulness and joy with those who sing the new song of Victory before the Throne.

Is it not this joyful spirit of adoration that we need, to widen the vision, to quicken the activities of our lives to-day? We look in upon ourselves too much. We see no further than our sufferings. We feel nothing deeper than our nerves. And all the while there is this great pulsing life of God into which we are asked to throw ourselves, taking delight in the grandeur of His divine purpose, surrendering in love to the magnificent wonder of His providing care, rising in faith to the glories of His Revelation. It is this which lifts us out of ourselves and gives us the true vision of life, enabling us to see the things of time in the light of the Eternal. In such a spirit of true adoration we need the faith that can greet each new revelation of the risen Saviour with the words of the worshipping disciple, "My Lord and my God."

Make an act of praise.

O Lord God Almighty, great and marvellous are Thy works, righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the Ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For Thou only art holy, for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest. Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power, for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be unto Thee, our God, for ever and ever. Amen.

VII

GALILEE

S. JOHN XXI. 1-14

JESUS had promised that He would meet the disciples in Galilee. Already they had spent eight days since the Resurrection at Jerusalem and, now that He had revealed Himself to all the Apostles in the Holy City, the time had come for them to withdraw from the busy streets of Jerusalem to the quiet country of the North for His fuller revelation. As in the days of His ministry they had been withdrawn from the crowded scenes of popular welcome into the quiet retreats of Northern Galilee, that Jesus might draw them closer to Himself and impart to them the deeper things of His law, so now for the further revelation of His will He would visit them in the quietude of the North, in the places which had already been hallowed by so many tender memories of fellowship and affection. Jesus would bind the new life to the certainties of the old, and by the calm rest of a retreat in Galilee prepare them for the coming labours of the Apostolate.

A.

“There were together Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, ‘I go a fishing.’ They say unto him, ‘We also go with thee.’” Thus the disciples, released from the immediate strain of their apostleship, went back to the familiar scenes in Galilee to find recuperation and rest in their old trade of fishing upon the Lake. That they might well be in need of leisure and rest no one will deny who reflects upon the conditions of their three years’ ministry. It had been a time of deepening anxiety and ever-increasing strain. At first, discipleship seemed to lay no heavy burden upon them. In public, there was the glad welcome with which expectant Galilee acclaimed the Prophet of Nazareth. In the intimacies of private intercourse, there were the powerful charm of a great Personality, the loving instruction of One Who read the secrets of their hearts, and on their part a glad surrender to the spell of a unique attraction. At first, the abandonment of all the accustomed ties of home and work might well seem amply repaid. The early days of that bright companionship were full of hope and ease of heart and radiant expectancy. But then came days of per-

plexity and clouded thought. It was not all glad welcome, not all a simple listening to words of grace. The thronging crowds filled the day with laborious duties. The mission tour among the villages brought its own insistent work. With increasing notoriety came increasing burdens. Bewilderment, suspicion, resentment followed fast upon one another, when Christ refused to be made king. Opposition asserted itself in high places, the organised and bitter hatred of the jealous leaders of religion. So the days by the lakeside and among the open hills of Galilee closed in with ugly portents of disaster. In the ministry which followed in Jerusalem the conflict became violently embittered. Each day brought fresh strife, blasphemies, threats of violence and of death. As the disciples moved uneasily through the streets of the Holy City, the objects of scorn, suspicion and growing hatred, they must have longed for just one of the old days upon the Lake of Galilee—away from all the turmoil of this dusty city life, out of the shadow of the houses, away from the gossiping bazaars and the gaze of scowling eyes—just one breath of the old free life in the familiar scenes. And then came the last days of accumulating horror and distress—the arrest, the forsaking, the trial, the Crucifixion—the strain of mingled suspense and self-reproach, of agonised shame and nameless fears. Surely it was upon a band of weary,

harassed, broken men that the Resurrection burst with its unexpected triumph. And Jesus knew their weariness and saw their need of rest. The work that He had in store for them would tax all their human strength. Inspired as they were with the growing certainties of Easter joy, and quickened, as they soon would be, with the new and vital energies of the Holy Spirit, they would yet need to be in full and untired possession of all their faculties of body and of soul, if their great work of witness was to be faithfully accomplished. So Jesus sent them away to Galilee for rest, for recreation, to recruit their bodies, to refresh their minds, to prepare them for the stress of the life-work that lay before them. And He would meet them there. It was thus in some way the holiday of the Apostles, when S. Peter said to his fellow-disciples "I go a fishing," and his brethren followed him with the cry, "We also go with thee."

Pray for perseverance in the faithful following of Christ.

Almighty God, Who didst give such grace unto Thy holy Apostles that they readily obeyed the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him without delay, Grant unto us all that we, being called by Thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

B.

It is not hard for us to recognise where the forces of recuperation lay in the time of rest which Christ prepared for His disciples. There was relief from the actual strain of work and anxiety. The powers of body, mind and soul which had been overtaxed had leisure to regain freshness and vitality. For the most active, for the most willing worker there must be days of relaxation. We need to be lifted out of the routine of daily life. Our work seldom puts pressure on all the faculties alike. Some few bear all the strain. And while in our leisure hours these are resting, there are set free and brought into play forces and aptitudes and capacities which in the daily work have to find severe repression and restraint. Holidays help to preserve the whole man. They not only give rest to the old, outworn faculties, but they develop other faculties and keep us from the threatened atrophy of many a fine instinct and beautiful possibility in life. Thus the whole personality is led on to new and happy development. Change of circumstance helps us to get a truer and wider view of life. We see things in their right perspective. We learn to estimate more clearly the proportionate value of our work. A new light breaks upon familiar duties. As we stand outside the machinery of our work, we can realise our freedom, and feel the inspiration of a deep and vital

motive of which we are often unconscious while we are actually absorbed in the pressing activities of the daily routine. So it was that the disciples, reassured and glad at heart, freed from anxiety, went off to their fishing and found rest.

Doubtless it was their close contact with Nature which was to help in their restoration. They went back to that open-air life in which they were continually in the grip of the elemental forces of Nature. Whether consciously realised, whether adequately expressed or no, such a life has never ceased to exercise a powerful influence upon the hearts of men. We need not fear to ascribe to the disciples those very feelings of reverence and awe, those stirrings of freedom, majesty and peace, which our own experience of Nature rouses in us to-day. It is true that the ancient world was strangely blind to the beauties of Nature. Yet Christ's joy in the lavish glories of His creation was neither stinted nor hidden. The disciples had the recent memories of three years' companionship and three years' teaching to reinforce the spontaneous promptings of Nature. In the glory and splendour of the world they had begun to read the infinite Beauty which eye hath not seen nor the heart of man conceived. Nature opened to them afresh all her treasures of healing and of peace. To us, who live in Christ, the holiday that brings closer contact with Nature brings a new revelation of God.

For to us, who come with our eyes enlightened with the faith of the Incarnation, Nature is the very veil of God, a Sacrament of His Beauty, the green robe which hides the lineaments of the divine Majesty present in the glories of His Creation. In the healing power, the soothing influence, the alluring suggestiveness, the bracing strength of the beauties of Nature, we come very close to God. Wherever we find the loveliness of Nature, shall we not feel that it is the Call of the Lord, Who has brought us to this hour of happiness and blessed us with a new vision of Himself?

There was no other within sight or sound,
Only the pines, the snows and peace profound.
And may not He, Who willed whatever is,
Amid the birth of worlds have thought on this,
Even on this hour of happiness for me?

A Holiday Prayer.

O God of Life and of Love, Who art the true Rest of the soul, sanctify to me my hours of rest. Keep me from all harm and evil and draw me nearer to Thyself. Enlighten my eyes that I may see Thee in the beauties of Thy creation and find Thee in all the ways of happiness. And grant that, strengthened in body, refreshed in mind and purified in soul by the vital energies of Thy indwelling Spirit, I may serve Thee faithfully in the life to which Thou hast called me, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C.

Galilee had been the scene of their vocation. Our Lord may have counted upon the old associations of happiness which clustered round the Lake, when He sent His disciples back to that familiar spot. The very genius of the place was to share in the work of recuperation. There, in the old, familiar haunts, what tender memories crowded upon them, visions of early boyhood, of eager enterprise upon the Lake, of that momentous Call to forsake all and follow Christ which had appealed to their first enthusiasm. The Lake had been the centre of all the joyous memories of their ministry. And now the genius of the place was to work its will upon them and the spell of old associations was to charm them back to happiness and strength and re-create them for the Master's work.

Those days by the lakeside were indeed a test of vocation. Was it not a severe test of loyalty to their mission that the Apostles should thus be sent back to their old life upon the lake? Might not the spell of old scenes have wrought upon them now so powerfully that they would once for all return to the fisherman's life? During these days they learnt where their real vocation lay, and the Call of the Lord sank abidingly into their hearts. They realised the greatness of the work from which they were resting, for which they were newly pre-

paring, and the old ambitions of life sank back into their proper insignificance. These days were a final test of vocation, a last temptation to withdraw from the Master's service.

And when they had proved their steadfastness, Jesus shewed Himself to them as He had promised, confirmed their call and gave them a pledge of the success of the new work to which He was leading them. They had toiled all the night and taken nothing. So human toil apart from Christ must be ever fruitless. Casting the net anew at Christ's own bidding, they presently "drew the net to land full of great fishes." God alone would be the source of true success in the work of the Church. Christ stood upon the shore, unrecognised till the eyes of love discerned Him. So is the Lord ever among us, directing our work, blessing our toil, yet long unrecognised until love finds Him out, detecting in those tones of imperious command the voice of God Himself. The meal that Jesus had prepared upon the shore was ample for them all, yet He would have them bring of the fish which they had caught. The Divine Sufficiency needs not our work, but welcomes it with loving acceptance and uses it for His own glory and our happiness. With such symbolic acts Jesus unveiled before His Apostles the glorious mission and victory of the Church. "Full of great fishes" the net of the Church shall be, and never a break in all its strain-

ing meshes. Such was the vision of hope with which Christ renewed the vocation of the disciples, and bound them once more to their high task. This is the vision which we must keep before our eyes as Jesus call us one by one to take our part in the mission of His Church. Amid all the present failures, even while we toil all the night and take nothing, there is Jesus watching from the shore, if only our eyes could see Him, through the gloom of the breaking dawn. Love will find Him. We can trust His power. We will obey His Word. And on the great feast day of the victorious Church, He will call us to Himself, who have shared with Him the Mission of the Father, and will crown our happiness by His loving acceptance of our work. That is the vision which will inspire us in all our ministries for Him on earth, the vision of triumphant success in the power of the risen Lord.

Make an offering of your work to God.

O Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who in Thy love hast chosen me and ordained me that I should go and bring forth fruit to Thy honour, accept, I beseech Thee, the offering of my work done in Thy Name and through Thy power, and grant to me ever the spirit of true obedience, increasing diligence, patient endurance, and such success as is according to Thy will, O Lord Thou Lover of my soul.

VIII

S. JOHN

S. JOHN XXI. 20-24. REV. I. 1-3, 9-20

“**L**ORD, and what shall this man do? If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” The delicate reserve of the writers of the New Testament shews itself in the sacred silences which surround the lives of those who were nearest to Jesus. It is not likely that we have the record of all the appearances of the risen Lord.

Here, as elsewhere, we are only told what is needful for the understanding of the history of the Church, for assurance as to the details of Christ's purpose, for certainty as to the methods by which the divine intention was to be fulfilled. We hear how S. Peter received his public recognition as leader and how the Apostles received their definite commission. The story of the conviction of S. Thomas is told that we might know the unanimity of witness which the Apostles bore to the resurrection of Jesus. The Blessed Virgin is spoken of among the company of

the Upper Room, that we might know how humbly she took her place in the Church of the redeemed. Yet can we doubt that Jesus had His own special message of comfort and revelation to bear to her whose heart had been pierced by the sword of so great a sorrow? But the revelation was for the comfort of her own soul alone, appropriate to her own unique office as His Virgin Mother, not for the general knowledge of the Church. Thus it remains among the wondrous silences of Scripture. Next to the Virgin Mary, S. John stands in the relation of closest intimacy to Jesus. We can hardly doubt that Jesus would have wished to explain to S. John all that He meant by the sacred legacy from the Cross, "Behold thy Mother." No one so closely as S. John could penetrate the inner mystery of the divine purpose of love.

Yet there is no recorded appearance of our Lord to the beloved Apostle alone. The only definite intimation of his future work lies implicit in Christ's answer to the anxious question of S. Peter: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" It was a natural query for S. Peter. He felt it strange, especially in his mood of chastened humility, that he himself should be marked out for the feeding of Christ's sheep by a definite commission, while S. John was passed over in silence. S. Peter was at all times generous and clear-sighted enough to recognise that here in the young Apostle who had been so

close to Jesus all the days of His ministry, lay gifts and capacities of service which must be of peculiar value to the future development of the Master's work.

It was inconceivable that to one who had the unerring insight of Christ, S. John should be lost in the mediocrity of his fellows. S. Peter recognised the greatness of S. John. What then could his work be? He had gifts of leadership quite as conspicuous, quite as sure and effective as those of S. Peter. He had a spiritual power, a patient tenderness and a sympathetic love, which would give him unique powers of usefulness both in the sphere of teaching and of government. What then shall this man do? And in effect Jesus told the eager disciple that He had His own place for S. John and his work. There should be no waste of gifts in the work of the Kingdom. When the older man had borne his witness and had passed through the glorious gate of martyrdom to his rest, then the younger should take up his work and carry it on victoriously. For the moment the two Apostles together should unite in leadership of the infant Church in its first persecution at Jerusalem. Then for a while S. John should withdraw from the fierce light of public leadership and in some sequestered place give himself to the care of the Virgin Mother, till reinforced by the experiences of that sacred intimacy he should come forth at length in the hour

of need, and take the protagonist's place in the great victory of Faith. So should he "tarry" till Jesus came.

A.

It is a delight to picture the childhood and youth of S. John, the son of Zebedee. It seems natural to think of him growing up at his mother's knee, drinking into his pure and loving heart the great words of Messianic prophecy, hoping with all the ardour of young Galilean chivalry that he might play some noble part in the coming of the Kingdom. The fiery energy of his character, which earned for him and his brother the title "Sons of Thunder," would mark him out in his mother's lovingly ambitious heart as a lad of unusual hope and promise. The wealth of Zebedee may have added special opportunities of culture and refinement, which would be turned to advantage in his quest of the coming Kingdom. High ideals of righteousness and growing sanctity of personal life quickened his flaming hope of national regeneration, so that he responded readily to the call of the Baptist. In the company of the Baptist his hopes kindled as he watched the marvellous response of every class to the startling appeal for personal holiness with which the wilderness of Judæa echoed. But the Baptist himself declared his work to be a mission of preparation. It evoked a sense of sin, quickened

conscience and roused the will to new determination. The Lamb of God that could take away sin was yet to be revealed. Not all of the Baptist's disciples were ready for that revelation. But the preacher of the wilderness knew to whom it might first be made. To the two young Galilean disciples, Andrew and John, he pointed out Jesus as He walked. And the heart of the son of Zebedee leapt up at once to meet the love of his Saviour. Of that first day spent by S. John with the Master to Whom from henceforth his life was pledged we have no record. We can but reverently picture the human delight of Jesus at finding one so pre-eminently fitted by affection, by sympathy, by insight and by purity of character to become His disciple. Easier still is it to imagine the fervid loyalty and generous ardour with which the young disciple would yield himself to the new allegiance to which his old master had so confidently committed him. And thus the wonderful days of the Ministry began. Admitted with his brother and S. Peter to the special intimacies of Christ, S. John was able to enter more deeply than they into the inner mind of Christ. There was a response of affection and a sympathy of understanding which marked him out from all others as the Apostle whom Jesus loved. Of any special marks of favour or opportunities of personal revelation the Gospels say nothing. Of his own love for Jesus he never speaks. It is a

mark of his gentle humility that to his own mind his greatest distinction lay in the title "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It is only as we meditate upon the Gospel story and study what he himself afterwards wrote, that we recognise how far more truly he was able to discern the mind of Christ than any of his fellow-disciples. Love gave insight. The wonder of Christ's Person had more significance for him. But he too failed at Gethsemane, and in all the miserable hours of the trial he could speak no word to save the Master.

The sacred charge of the Virgin Mother given to him from the Cross was indeed the tender sign of the Master's trust and forgiveness. Who can picture the anxious questionings of love, the yearning hopes, the dreadful fears that filled the disciple's heart when Jesus lay dead in the tomb? None could recall so well as he the mysterious words of hope and triumphant promise with which the Master had spoken of the rising on the third day. At the first call of Mary of Magdala S. John, outstripping S. Peter, rushed to the sepulchre. And as he stood within the tomb "he saw and believed." It was natural that he should be the first Apostle to "believe." But even so, his belief was not yet so strong and sure that he could rouse his brethren from their gloom. Not till Jesus had appeared to the Apostles on the evening of the first Easter Day could they be persuaded of the reality of His

Resurrection. We can imagine how deeply S. John entered into the mystery of the Resurrection Life of the Master. It was he who was able first to recognise Christ upon the shore of the Lake of Galilee. "It is the Lord." The eyes of love could no longer be holden.

He who soon was to witness so wonderfully to the Deity of Jesus must have lost no opportunity of revelation during those forty days of intercourse with the risen Christ. Even the beloved Apostle had let slip precious opportunities in the last three years, through preoccupation with splendid dreams and visions of his own. He must have felt the need of instruction. He was well prepared to learn. The overpowering marvel of the Resurrection had suddenly opened the eyes of his spirit. And he had for preceptor the very Prince of Teachers. At last the Kingdom was to be founded, and founded through him. It was to be his life-work. It was to begin at once. Jesus would speak "of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." And if we have no written record of that very teaching, where else can we read its meaning so clearly as in the work and life of the beloved Apostle of the Lord? The organisation, clear, precise, unfaltering, which the Church at once received at the hands of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost is record sufficient of what the Master had commanded and taught. We may not determine exactly how far

Christ was content only to lay down the general and broad principles of the work which should carry on the fruits of His redemption upon earth, or how far He descended to definite detail. Nor need we ask. The authority of that organisation, so clearly seen, so unhesitatingly developed, has for us the authority of Christ Himself, even if in His wisdom He left the fashioning of the details unreservedly to the Apostles, guided by the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost. Their definite work was to frame the constitution, create the organisation and lay down the lines upon which the abundant grace of God was to be ministered unfailingly and assuredly to the needy souls of men. They worked, they spoke with the certain promise of the Divine help. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" is the authoritative phrase with which S. John and his fellow-Apostles speak of their formal decisions. They spoke, they acted, conscious of the plenary authority of Christ. And in no life so clearly as in the long ministry of S. John can we see the character of that government and faith of the Church, which the risen Lord committed to His Apostles. The witness of S. John is unequalled for cogency and truth, not only because he lived so long, but also because as the Apostle of Love he would seek to fulfil studiously the will of the Master. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Thus, with calm certainty, the early Church rested upon

the ordinances of the Apostles. The sanction of their authority was the court of final appeal in matters of faith, government and worship.

And we are proud to-day, confessing our faith in the Church Apostolic, to accept the same authority and to appeal with confidence to the same tribunal. The recorded utterances of the Apostles may be few, the story of their lives almost unknown, but it is not hard in the history of the Church to see their clear, decisive teaching, to trace surely the lines of gradual development which they secured, to note the way in which their plenary authority was used to guide the Church of Christ, to safeguard all essential truths and to preserve the Faith undefiled in the midst of generations crooked and perverse. It was the work of S. John "tarrying" beyond all the other Apostles to emphasise these first traditions of the Church, which from the very Lips of Christ he transmitted in his own person, pure and undefiled, to the Church of the second century.

Pray for loyalty to the faith of the Apostles.

O Almighty God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone, grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

B.

“If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” For S. John the Call of the Lord was the call to “tarry.” The martyrdom of a life of tarrying witness involved sufferings quite as great, and required courage quite as undaunted, as the martyrdom of a sudden and agonising death. One by one his friends and fellow-labourers passed from him—his brother James, first Apostle to win the martyr’s crown, the Virgin Mary whose loving intercourse and sacred confidences had helped to build him up in the faith of the Incarnation, the Apostles S. Peter and S. Paul dying nobly for the Master in the very capital of the world. Again and again S. John bade farewell to those who had laboured with him in the Gospel, to converts whom he had brought to the knowledge of the Truth, to friends made dear by the daily fellowship of grace. One by one they passed from him, through such different doors of death—by fire, by sword, by persecution, through suffering and sickness, some in sorrow, some in peace, some after long lingering, some on a sudden call. So we watch S. John tarrying till his Lord comes, a very Apostle of bereavement.

The deaths of S. Peter and S. Paul must have been a call to wider work and more extended ministry. With new fervour of earnestness S. John gave

himself to the instruction of those young disciples, who were presently to make the Church ring with the echoes of his teaching. With patient steadfastness he provided in the cities of Asia Minor for the permanence of Church life by the establishment of episcopal ministries. And with the fall of Jerusalem came the divine sanction of his apostolic work. The fall of the Holy City was God's call to the Church to realise its world-wide mission and to separate itself from every merely local limitation. To one who "tarried" no event could have been so significant for the future of the Church. But while it obliterated old landmarks and swept away old privileges, it added new dangers of persecution. For not only were the Jews embittered afresh against the Church, but the difference between Jew and Christian was made manifest, and the tolerance of Judaism which hitherto had screened the infant Church from Roman persecution, no longer availed to protect the Christians from the attack of the pagan state. The life of the Church over which S. John presided became increasingly a life of suffering, anxiety and persecution. In this persecution the tarrying Apostle was himself called to share. The day came when S. John found himself a prisoner "for the testimony of Jesus Christ" in the isle of Patmos. As he looked over the blue sea and saw in the east the dim outline of the beautiful, sin-stricken city of Ephesus, he

knew the deep agony of the pastoral heart, sorrowing for "the beautiful flock" left a prey to the "grievous wolves" that waited to enter in. But if he "tarried" for sorrow, he tarried also for joy, the joy of an ever-growing revelation. The very crisis of his loneliness and spiritual anguish at Patmos became the opportunity of his most glorious vision. Heaven opened before the prophet's eyes. In clear vision he beheld the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lamb reigning upon the Throne, and in words of glowing beauty and glorious faith S. John declared the triumph of God's Church over all the powers of evil and of death.

But Patmos, the prison-isle of Vision, was not the end of the Apostle's "tarrying." There was a witness yet to be borne which none but he could bear. As the years went by and the story of the Lord's life became more widely known, there were those who, steeped in the mystic spirit of the East, tried to adapt the Gospel story to the needs of their own philosophies. For them the Gospels were a symbolic poem, a message of great intellectual and moral beauty, but not the narrative of a real life, not the history of the actual entrance of God upon the plane of human existence. The risen Christ was to them a beautiful myth, the poetic embodiment of a great idea. There was only one way by which such false teaching could be effectually disproved. The evidence of an eye-witness

could not be gainsaid. Thus in his last years S. John, who had tarried so long in the ministry of witness to the risen Lord, who for more than seventy years had proclaimed the story of his intercourse with the Incarnate in the intimacies of daily life, set himself to leave a written record of his own experience. He had seen, he had handled the Word of Life. For those whom his spoken word could never reach he would leave in writing his clear personal testimony to the reality of the Incarnate Christ. "It was so; so I heard and saw." For this he waited. No one but he who had lived in such close fellowship with the Incarnate during the days of His ministry, could so convincingly give the lie to those false and specious teachings which struck at the very life of Christianity. It was a witness which no later generation could give. Only one who had "tarried" could offer his personal testimony at the very moment when the danger was most grave. So wonderfully did S. John follow the Call of the Lord and prove himself faithful to that essential and primary work of the Apostolate—personal witness to the reality and truth of the Resurrection of the Incarnate.

Pray for faith in the truth of the Incarnation.

Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee to cast Thy bright beams of light upon Thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed

Apostle and Evangelist Saint John may so walk in the light of Thy truth that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C.

And we too are called to "tarry till the Lord come." There is no ministry so difficult to us as the ministry of tarrying. Especially if there be the Boanerges spirit of enthusiastic devotion, it is the more hard to conform to the Divine Will which bids us tarry. Most difficult of all is the patience with ourselves which all true spiritual progress needs. There is innate in most of us a desire for outward activity, which more and more becomes to us the measure and standard of success. The quick ministry of S. Peter is more attractive to us than the "tarrying" service of S. John. Yet it is by the restful tarrying till the Lord Himself become more fully revealed and recognised in our hearts, that true advance is made in our spiritual life. It takes so long to make secure each step which we have gained. We long to be going forward, when we have not yet made the last step permanently secure. This "Lord's leisure" which we have to wait for in the spiritual life may seem strangely slow, but we must remember that it is not due to any want of power on God's part, nor to any desire of God's to hold us back, but it is

governed by His unerring knowledge of our powers. We must learn to be content to "tarry till the Lord come," as we submit our wills to Him for consecration and our minds for enlightenment and our souls for grace. How many a vocation has been lost by impatience! An eagerness and zeal not according to knowledge have urged men on to snatch a vocation which was not really theirs. They have not waited patiently upon the Lord in prayer and obedience.

And through many an agony of suffering God may ask us to tarry, as He did S. John. For God comes in suffering. His Love is expressed upon the Cross, and by the Cross the lovers of God must tarry with the very Apostle of love. Of that love of God the Apostle who tarried never failed to bear convincing witness. It was at the very end of his life that he wrote. Having behind him that long life, touched with so many sorrows, enriched by such a tender and brave spirit of patience, ennobled with so many marks of suffering and sacrifice, out of the depths of that unique experience S. John called the wide world to witness that God is love. Had the Apostle written earlier in his life, his message could never have had such convincing power. But now at the very end of life he speaks, and interpreting for us the lessons of a crowded lifetime declares, with unhesitating certainty and with all the fervour of a man who has lived very near to God, that the

Lord for Whom he has patiently tarried is indeed the Lord of Love.

It is hard to tarry when physical powers begin to fail. It is difficult to be sure that the Lord will really come to us just in those very failing powers of body and of mind. Yet it is true that this weakening of the powers of the body is the Lord's opportunity. With the fading memory familiar words of prayer and hymn may not be so easily recalled, we may not remember for long the words of comfort and teaching which we have only just read. But then is it not God's way of asking for an ever-fresh renewal of consecration, an ever-present act of oblation? We feel that from moment to moment we are living on the fresh grace of God. And if the intellectual powers seem to grip less firmly the actualities of daily life, yet there is an inner quickening of the soul by the grace of the indwelling Spirit, which makes us realise increasingly the things of God and brings us peace, so that at eventide there is light. For such tarrying, till the Lord come, we need the strength of love "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure, be strong and He shall comfort thy heart. And put thou thy trust in the Lord."

Pray for endurance to tarry till the Lord come.

Almighty and eternal Father, Who didst give such grace to Thy Apostle S. John that he tarried patiently for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

and served Him faithfully in his ministry of witness and of love, grant that by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit we may wait steadfastly upon Thy Will and through all tarrying and toil may be strengthened in obedience and hope until He come, Who is our Saviour and our God, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

IX

THE ASCENSION

S. MARK XVI. 19, 20. S. LUKE XXIV. 50-53. ACTS I. 1-12

“AND He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His Hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.” In such simple words S. Luke describes the wonder of the Ascension.

A.

Whenever we speak about God we are reminded that we have no heavenly language. Our poor words are miserably inadequate to express the realities of the Divine Life. It is hard to describe fitly even what our minds are able to conceive. We can understand more than we can express, and even our understanding at its best follows the great Realities a long way off. It is natural that it should be so, for there remains ever the abiding difference between the Creator and the creature. And nowhere is this inadequacy of speech more deeply felt than in our

attempts to describe the Ascension of our Lord. It is not merely that God is a mystery. Man in the fulness of his being is a mystery too. There are depths in human life which we cannot yet fully fathom. There are powers which we cannot truly define, intimations of hidden glory which cannot be fully revealed. The Ascension not only opens up a view into these profound reaches of human experience, which science is not yet able to explore, but also reveals something of the glory of God Himself which passes understanding. It thins for a moment the veil behind which the glories of the life of God are hid.

In the Ascension of Christ we see the fulfilment of the great purpose of the Incarnation. Man in the Person of the Incarnate attained at the Ascension to the glory for which he was made. The whole purpose of Christ's life was to fill man's life with glory. God Himself has the glory proper to His own Life. The eternal bliss of unoriginate, self-existent Being, of infinite power, of inexhaustible love—that is the glory of God. Not mere eternal splendour and brilliance, but inherent power of life—that is the divine glory. And God had a purposed glory for man, a glory which was to pass to man through the Incarnation of His Son. That was the meaning of Christ's life on earth. He came to crown human life with glory. The Ascension is the fulfilment of that mission. That Humanity which had

passed scatheless through all the temptations of life, which had received increasing gifts of glory from the Spirit, passed triumphant into the very Presence of God, consummated in perfection and beauty. The glory of man as revealed in the life of the Incarnate was manifested not in any outward splendour, but in the power of perfect obedience, in the happiness of perfect sonship. It shewed itself in miracles, manifesting forth His glory so that the disciples believed in Him. It was seen in the suffering of the Passion. "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him." In the prayer before the Crucifixion, Jesus affirmed the fulfilment of His task: "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them." So Christ passed to the death upon the Cross. And beyond the Cross there was a new glory. Manhood received a new glory in the new powers of Christ's risen Body. But not yet had the full destiny of man been achieved. The Ascension had a final glory to add to the Body of Jesus by taking it up into new conditions of existence higher than those of earth. Through all the ranks of human and angelic glory, Jesus lifted up our Manhood to the very Throne of God, the Holy Spirit imparting new gifts of beauty and power as it passed from glory to glory. That was the gift of the Ascension. Doubtless there was an outward splendour, the symbol and sign of the inward, which began to radiate from Christ's ascended Body as He

became lost to the view of the Apostles in the cloud of light. But the real glory was the spiritual exaltation, the new dignifying of that Human Nature which He bore, as He raised it beyond the mere glory of the Resurrection and filled it with the glory of heaven. Thus Jesus set Man, perfectly and supremely glorified, on the right Hand of the Father. And His Manhood thus glorified is the instrument through which God the Father acts for the sanctification of the world. In the Ascension lies the achievement of the purpose of the Incarnation. Man has been brought to God and his life has been filled with glory.

Perhaps it is just this sense of the dignity of our human nature which we need to cherish to-day. It is not merely that we have the promise of a glorious future, if in this life we follow after holiness and truth. But already our life is touched with glory. Jesus did not so take our Manhood into new conditions of glory, that it should be kept in isolated splendour, a mere marvel to be gazed at from afar. But at once the glory which He won for man was imparted to mankind through the gift of the Spirit. And into that glory of human life we enter to-day by the gate of Baptism. Our individual life is filled with new capacities, new hopes and new powers of spiritual apprehension. The glory which others cannot see is not only given, but made visible to us who are baptised. The fellowship of the Church is a

fellowship of glory. And the glory is like that of the Incarnate Life of Christ Himself. It is not an eternal splendour, it is not a power of ecstatic vision granted to the soul, in order that it may live consciously in regions of high rapture and exaltation, but it is the glory of obedience, of ability to endure suffering according to God's will, the glory of holiness, of communion with God, the glory of achievement through the grace of the indwelling Spirit, the glory of realised fellowship with one another in Christ. This is the Ascension glory, in the power of which each one of us may enrich his life to-day. We know indeed our own weaknesses, we are conscious of our failures and our sins, but looked at in the light of God Who has created, redeemed and sanctified us, we are equal to the high destiny of divine fellowship to which He has called us, we are sufficient for those services of high thought, unselfish sacrifice and generous obedience which our Lord has set before us.

In our work we can feel that we have the glorious powers of the Ascension to draw upon for the perfect fulfilment of our daily duty. In our prayer, let us realise that even where our conscious powers of spiritual apprehension may fail, there is yet a real life of spiritual glory which is most surely ours through our sacramental union with the ascended Christ. We shall try in heart and mind to ascend into the heavens and with Christ continually to

dwell. And as we persevere in prayer, we shall certainly grow more conscious of the uplifting powers of that heavenly sphere in which all our acts of devotion are made. But it is not the consciousness itself that is the measure of our heavenly glory. Those who are in Christ are already enjoying a life whose "citizenship is in heaven." What we need, in order to make full proof of these heavenly powers, is not so much consciousness of spiritual glory, as faith in the reality of our present heavenly life. We must be assured of our present position of privilege and power as sons of God and joint heirs with Christ, already partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. When we kneel to pray, it helps us, if we picture to ourselves either the Throne of God and of the Lamb, or the dear and familiar Altar where we are accustomed to seek the grace of God. It helps us because we are lifted at once into the consciousness of those heavenly realities which by the Ascension have been brought so near. And as we pass upon our way and take up the burden of our work, the days will always be filled with a sense of glory and the peace of heaven, if we can lift up our hearts to recognise the ascended Lord, Whose Hands of Benediction are resting ever upon our lives.

Pray for heavenly-mindedness in our daily work.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens,

so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

B.

When after forty days of the risen Life Jesus led forth the Apostles to Bethany, it was that they might witness His entrance upon the final state of human glory. It was expedient for them that He should go away. In the disappearances of the Resurrection Life they had learned the reality of His continued existence in the fulness of His risen humanity, even while He remained invisible to their eyes. They were now prepared for that final disappearance of His visible Presence, which was to be the characteristic of the ascended Life. Yet He would still accommodate His actions to the understanding of His Apostles. Visibly before their eyes His Body rose from the earth until it was lost in a cloud of glory. The visible uplifting towards heaven was symbolic of the spiritual elevation of His Humanity to a higher state of glory. The essence of the Ascension was not the upward movement of the risen Body through the air, but the exaltation of the Human Nature into a new condition of glory. Visibly before the eyes of the Apostles the bright cloud of glory received the Body of their Lord. It was the symbol of that new condition of

spiritual life upon which His Manhood was then entering. And the Hands uplifted in blessing were a token of that perpetual Benediction which should flow continually from His ascended Manhood. It was expedient for them that the Master should go away. He went, that in His Manhood He might receive gifts for men, that He might pour forth from His fully glorified Humanity gifts of grace and power for the quickening of human life upon earth. Not for Himself, but for us did He receive glory. With the Ascension Jesus entered upon a wider mission. No longer was the Incarnate Presence to observe the limitations of earthly life. Hitherto that Presence had only been revealed acting at one place at one time. Now He entered Heaven as the God-Man, that He might from the very throne of Heaven operate towards men in new life-giving agencies of grace which should extend throughout all the world. At one place, and at one place only at one time, had He visibly appeared before His Apostles as He consecrated that first Eucharist in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. Now when the glory of the Ascension has culminated in the gift of Pentecost, at myriad Altars at once He is the Consecrator to-day. In the days before the Ascension the words He spoke, the virtue which went forth from Him were confined to one small circle of influence. Now to-day through multitudinous agencies His glorified Humanity acts in certitude

of sacramental power. The Ascension might seem at first to hide from us the risen Christ. It might seem a withdrawal, an unexpected absence, a sudden cessation of His Incarnate work. But, looked at closely, it is seen to be the revelation of a new and wider activity of the Incarnate in the souls of men. It is not a forsaking, but a more intimate approach, a nearness that can be more universally appropriated, a Presence that can penetrate into the most secret sanctuary of the human soul and recreate man with the life of God.

Pray that we may be steadfast in the faith of the Ascension.

Almighty God, Glorious and Eternal, Whose only begotten Son Jesus Christ has been exalted to the highest Heaven and has opened to us men the way to ascend up whither He Himself is gone, Grant that we who do believe the Saviour of mankind to be seated with Thee in Thy Majesty, may feel that He abideth with us here according to His promise even unto the end of the world, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, one God, for ever and ever.

C.

The Ascension of Christ marks the beginning of a new work in Heaven. Jesus Christ, Who is become our great High Priest by identifying Himself with our human nature, pleads before the Father the merits of His eternal Sacrifice. It is not as God, but

as God-Man, that He stands before the Throne of God, ever offering the great Sacrifice, ever living to make intercession for us by virtue of His Perfect Manhood. The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Sacrifice began in Heaven in the eternal love of the ever-blessed Trinity. It was manifested on earth in the Incarnation. But neither the sacrifice of Bethlehem, nor the sacrifice of Calvary, neither the human Birth nor the Death upon the Cross, exhausted the sacrificial work of Jesus. Most conspicuously and gloriously sacrifice was manifested in the redemptive Death upon the Cross. But the end was not reached at Calvary. Sacrifice finds its fulfilment in the perpetual offering of man to God in Heaven itself. The sacrifice of God means that God has stooped to raise man to Himself in Heaven. And Man is in Heaven in the Person of the Son of God made Man, in Whom we see the destiny of the whole race fulfilled. In the sacrifices of the Old Covenant it was not the act of killing the victim which consummated the sacrifice. The sacrifice was only completed when the blood of the dead victim was presented upon the Altar. It was that which symbolised the actual bringing to God of the life that had passed through death. In the same way the Eternal Sacrifice does not find its completed and perfect consummation upon the Cross. The crisis is there, but the true and final fulfilment of the Sacrifice is the

carrying of that perfect and obedient Humanity, which has passed through death, into the very Presence of God. There in Heaven is the Sacrifice of the High Priest achieved, as He presents that Humanity now triumphant and glorified before the Throne. In the perfection of that Manhood which He had taken to Himself, bearing in His glorified Body all the marks of His earthly experience, Christ presents and pleads the offering of perfect Obedience, the acceptable Sacrifice. The Presence of the God-Man in Heaven is the perpetual sacrifice.

But that Sacrifice made by Him Who is our Representative is not made apart from us. We who yet live on earth, bound still in sin, but filled with hope of victory, are not denied participation there. We are in Christ, and Christ acts towards the Father not only in the work of His heavenly pleading, but He acts towards the Father also on earth through the Church which is His Body. Here below He presents Himself to us in the sacramental gifts upon the earthly Altar, that we may present Him, not typically, but actually and really, in the fulness of His Sacramental Presence before the Father. It was to the Ascension that our Lord Himself appealed as the explanation of all the mysteries of the Sacramental Life. "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?"

The gift of His true Presence upon our earthly Altars is the opportunity of our offering upon earth.

The Memorial of His Death, even His Presence which is the guarantee of His victory over Death and of His completed Atonement, is offered by us before the Father. It is the same Christ Who is offered, there in the undimmed splendour of His Heavenly Beauty, here in the veiled glory of His Sacramental Presence. That very Humanity which pleads so effectually on Heaven's eternal Throne is offered by us here in the sacramental Mysteries of the Altar. Here in the Holy Eucharist it is Christ giving Himself to us that we may give ourselves in Him to God. For it is not a merely mechanical offering. We have our opportunity of willing co-operation, of sympathetic identification with His perfect offering of obedient Manhood. On our side the Eucharist is the sign of man's readiness to offer, if only we have something worthy to offer. In ourselves we have no worthy, no sufficient, no sinless offering. But when Jesus is our offering, then the Eucharist becomes for us on earth the consummation of sacrifice. God has placed in our unworthy hands that sacrifice of obedience, that spotless surrender, that stainless offering of adoring homage which by our sin we had lost. He Whom we offer is the Perfect Sacrifice, the Sinless, the Righteous One. In Him, by virtue of the powers of His Ascended Life, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for which we were made is at length offered by us upon earth. What a glory it is

to think that we *can* offer ! What a joy to know that we have something to uplift ! This is the gift of the Ascension. Responding with humble gladness to the Call of the Ascended Lord, we can approach the Altar of His Love and there gather up all our own weak efforts, our struggling endeavours, our imperfect obedience, and offer them under the cover of His Perfect Offering, knowing that we are accepted in the Beloved.

We here present, we here spread forth to Thee
That only offering perfect in Thine Eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal Sacrifice.

Pray that the gifts of the Ascension may be ours through the grace of the Altar.

O God, Who art the Life of the faithful, the Glory of the humble and the Blessedness of the righteous, make us through the grace of Thy Holy Mysteries partakers of life eternal and fellow-heirs with Christ of Thy heavenly kingdom, and grant that through this Sacrament of union we may attain to a sure hope, that that shall be accomplished in the Body of Thy whole Church which has already been fulfilled in its Head, even Jesus Christ, our ascended Lord and Saviour.

X

PENTECOST

ACTS II. 1-11

THE days between the Ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit were days of prayer and adoration and gladness for the disciples. Already they had become inspired with a great hope. They had entered into the Mind of Christ and were ready to give themselves gladly to fulfil His sovereign purpose. They waited for the "Promise of the Father," for that communication of Life which should come from the ascended and glorified Lord through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The first gift of the Resurrection Day, when Christ breathed upon His disciples and said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," had yet to be completed by the full indwelling of the Spirit coming forth from the perfected Humanity of Christ.

A.

Jesus had always spoken of His going to the Father, not as the end of His work, but as the begin-

ning of His greatest activity. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father." The Ascension would lead to the inauguration of a wider work which should be carried on in His power. His earthly life had been the preparation for that work of the kingdom which His disciples were to carry on in the power of the Spirit. The Humanity which Jesus bore was the fulfilment of the divine hope, so long frustrated by man's sin, of finding a holy abiding-place for the indwelling of the Spirit in man. The Sacred Humanity of Christ, conceived of the Holy Ghost, was ever perfectly responsive to the Divine Will. And in the days of Christ's life before the Ascension the operation of that Humanity was confined within the limits of His own visible activities. Its powers were at work to heal, its wisdom to teach, its virtues to give strength and cleansing to men, but its operation was external to human personality. It acted *on* man, not yet *in* men. "He dwelleth *with* you and shall be *in* you." The Apostles were already moved by the Spirit to faith and obedience and love, but they could not yet have the full communication of the gift of Christ's sacred Humanity. That was to come through the indwelling Spirit, Who should be poured out upon them from the glorified Manhood of the Incarnate. It was for our sakes that Jesus received the Holy Ghost in the fulness of His Humanity. He was baptised with the Holy Ghost in order that He might impart to the world the gifts

of His Spirit-bearing Manhood. This would be the fulfilment of the work of the Incarnation. And for this the Apostles waited at Jerusalem. It was on the day of Pentecost when all the brethren were gathered together that this gift of the Spirit was made, which quickened the Church upon earth and endowed it with divine authority and power. The Church was the extension of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the actual Body of Christ, quickened by His own Life through the Spirit. In clear and evident form the great gift was given. All ears heard the sound of the rushing mighty wind from heaven, which filled all the house where they were sitting. The outward glory of the flames of fire lighting upon each gave visible witness of the promised outpouring of the Spirit of God. The flame "sat upon each of them." Each received the gift of the Spirit, empowering him for the individual work to which Christ had called him and for which he had been prepared during the great Forty Days. To the Apostles came the power of the Spirit, conveying plenary authority in the Society of God upon earth for government, for discipline, and for teaching of the truth. To all alike came the initial gift of the Holy Spirit's indwelling with the power to respond to the individual vocation of God. To those who were there gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was thus given immediately by the direct act of God. They were the

firstfruits of Christ's Redemption, the elect, through whom the gifts of the Spirit should be handed on to others. For upon all others the outpouring of the Spirit and His consecrating grace came by the mediatorial agency of sacrament. Thus the Church of God started upon its way, going forth with the Presence of Christ and in the Power of the Spirit to claim the whole world for God, Who made it for Himself and had redeemed it from sin with the precious Blood of His dear Son.

Pray for the Church of God, as the instrument of man's redemption.

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on Thy whole Church, that wonderful and sacred Mystery. And by the tranquil operation of Thy perpetual providence carry out the work of man's salvation, and let the whole world feel and see that things which were cast down are being made new, and that all things are returning to perfection through Him from Whom they took their origin, even through our Lord Jesus Christ.

B.

The day of Pentecost was the Birthday of a society in whose life Christ Himself would live, through whose acts He would work. It was the return of Christ upon earth through the ministry of the Spirit. The Spirit came charged with a new mission of life, coming as the Spirit of Christ, bringing into human

life not only a Divine Presence but the Presence of the Incarnate. The Spirit bestows upon us not merely union with God but union through God made Man. For Christ has not gone back into the hidden glories of Godhead as He came forth. He has taken Humanity up into the presence of God for ever.

The Church is then the Body of Christ in simple reality, the living organism which He uses to do His work, the society of His foundation in which the deeds wrought by Him in His earthly life are perpetuated by the Holy Spirit to the end of the world. The Holy Spirit is the Source of its Life and of its Unity. The Unity of the Spirit is the Spirit-given Life of the Church. The Christian Unity is a deeper unity than that of race. S. Paul realised that. Brought up in religious surroundings which breathed the spirit of exclusive unity, he lived to cast away the fetters of Jewish exclusiveness, while he retained in a more impressive and enduring form the ideal of unity. He saw that the Unity of Christ's Church broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile. It was a unity of inner life which transcended all differences of natural character and individual gifts. In the dissensions at Corinth he had healed the external breaches of Church life by reminding his converts that the Spirit by Whom they had been baptised into one Body was a Spirit of order and not of confusion—a Spirit with manifold gifts of

grace, vitalising with individual powers of ministry each separate personality, but subordinating the work of each single member to the needs of the whole Body, inspiring varieties of service, differences of administration, but energising all with one life.

And that one life is the very life of God. There lies the secret of Unity. It is the Unity of the Life of God. S. Paul looked at the Church on the practical side, as it expressed itself in the world of men. He saw men caught up into the fellowship of the Body by the gift of the Spirit, and thus united to the One Lord, whose Life the Holy Ghost transmits. Behind and beyond, as the ultimate source, he saw the Father, the very Fount of Godhead, Who while he remains ever supreme *over* all by virtue of His infinite transcendence, yet moves *through* all in the power of Divine Immanence and is in a special way *in* all through the ministry of the Spirit. The unity is a unity of Life—the very Life of Christ the Head. Into that one Life man is actually and definitely incorporated by the gift of Baptism. This is the fulfilment of the great Intercession of Christ for the unity of His Church: “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be *one in Us*.” The unity for which Christ looked was founded in the life of God Himself. Just as the Father lives in the Son as His organ and instrument of revelation and as the Object also of His

infinite Love, just as the Son lives in the Father, as the express Image of His Person and the effulgence of His glory, so His followers are to have not merely harmony of moral purpose and unity of affection, but actual unity of substance, a deep fundamental unity of life. This one life is communicated through sacramental ministries, the validity of which is guaranteed by the preservation of Apostolic Order. This unity of life, in itself invisible though sacramentally imparted, when duly and fully cherished shews itself in external marks of union and fellowship. It is the life of the glorified Humanity of Christ, manifesting itself normally in concord and amity, a unity which is marred and outraged, though not broken, by every self-willed thought, by every deed of unkindness and of sin.

This is the Unity which binds together the living and the dead in one unbroken fellowship of Life. It is a Unity of divine Life, ministered to us first by the Spirit through the Sacrament of Baptism, into which we enter more consciously and more deeply by the consecration of our lives at Confirmation, in the fellowship of which we grow with every Eucharist.

It is this vital union with Jesus which determines the Holiness of the Church. The Church is not holy because it is made up of holy men, but it is holy because it possesses the valid sacraments of holiness, by which men grow in righteousness and truth, because it upholds in its teaching the supreme idea

of Holiness, which the life of Christ reveals. The Church ever stands for the highest and holiest conception of human life. For it presents to man the ideal of the Life of Christ made accessible to us through the grace of the sacraments. And to-day the duty of the Church in the face of growing laxity of public opinion is to uphold bravely the Christian ideal of holiness in all relations of life. If the ideal of the Church is high and puts a strain upon our obedience, at least it has the supreme authority of Christ. For the Church, duly guided into all wisdom by the Holy Spirit according to Christ's promise, speaks with the authority of Christ Himself. There may be points of minor detail upon which the verdict of the Church is uncertain, but on the fundamental duties of morality in such relations as those of the home and of marriage, the Church speaks with no uncertain voice and claims our ready and frank obedience. Only those who fully recognise in the Church the authority of Christ can have the strength to obey. What most we need is the solemn conviction that with all its mistakes and failures and weaknesses the Church is yet the Body of Christ, invested with His authority, quickened with His life, sustained by His Presence. The Church is in a real and full sense the Kingdom of God. His Kingship is mediated naturally through human agents and by visible means, because it is the Kingdom of the Incarnate. It is to-day, as ever, the promised

sphere of Divine activity, of Divine revelation, the sphere in which the supreme sovereignty of God is welcomed by hearts of willing obedience. May it be ours so to use the gifts of Churchmanship that our lives may testify by their beauty and holiness to the grace and power of the Sacraments, and may win others to accept the Divine authority of the Church of Christ.

Pray for the quickening of Church life and witness.

Almighty and everlasting God, by Whose Spirit the whole Body of the Church is governed and sanctified, receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before Thee for all estates of men in Thy Holy Church, that every member of the same in his vocation and ministry may truly and godly serve Thee, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

C.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the quickening of individual life. Man cannot live by bread alone. Earthly things do not suffice. God's grace is needed. Not merely because of sin, but always in the eternal decrees of God, grace was needed for the fulfilment of human life. Man, by the very terms of creation, was to be developed by fellowship with God. And that fellowship was eternally designed to be a fellowship with the Incarnate Son of God, achieved through the indwelling Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is a

needed gift, such as even Christ Himself received for the perfection of His peerless Manhood. It is an eternal gift, completing human personality, opening out the prospect of a wider, fuller, richer life than this world can ever understand or attain. It suggests the possibility of a fellowship with God, which, without confusing the human and divine, yet achieves in us a vital union with God, in intimacy and reality transcending all that in this life we can ever realise of personal fellowship. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the first and earliest spring of spiritual life, is the source of continual development and growth at every stage, the promise of perfected personality hereafter. It is the gift of true Sonship. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It is not that we have to *become* sons in some distant future. But we *are* led by the Spirit. We *are* sons already. Sonship is God's gift to us, a present possession, a privilege to be exercised, a power to be used. Sonship means a real assured trust—the very starting-point of our spiritual life is meant to be a great assurance. God is faithful. Yet day by day this initial glory of Sonship is forgotten. The divine Fatherhood is slighted. We cease to trust. We grow anxious and perturbed, not in the great things of life, but in the small things, the things that make up our daily life, the things that really matter. We need the stillness and the quiet of a great conviction. We may not

indeed have full vision, because we are but children. But children are called to trust. Calm, unquestioning trust, simple loyalty, utter faith—this is the glory of childhood. “Beloved, now *are* we the children of God.” So, led by the Spirit, we make our act of faith and realise our Sonship day by day. Whether it be the infirmities of advancing years, the uncertainties of daily work, the difficult decisions of life, the pressure of repeated temptations, the consciousness of moral weakness and ineffectiveness, or the sense of unutterable need—in all alike we must exercise the calm trust of Sonship in the power of the Spirit. Let us go on, as Francis de Sales used to say to his pupils, in all simplicity. Do not be so anxious to win a quiet mind and it will be all the quieter. Do not examine so closely the progress of your soul. Do not crave so much to be perfect, but just let your spiritual life be guided by your duties. God, Who has led you so far already by the Spirit, will lead you safely on. Be altogether at rest in the assurance of His loving care. The leading of the Spirit, true Sonship, means trust.

And the leading of the Spirit means personal holiness. Perhaps we are in danger of forgetting how and where this holiness is really achieved. We are inclined to regard holiness as some delicate grace of spiritual refinement which is too tender to have any relation to the rougher aspects of daily life. It becomes a beautiful ideal, which those who

have the hard work of life to endure are apt regretfully to set aside as impossible for them. But that is not the holiness of Sonship. Sonship means the fulfilment of duties. In and through those very duties we shall find the way of holiness. It is the perfect fulfilment of daily obligations which is the means and measure of our holiness. All life is touched with God. And all our faculties are enriched with the power of the indwelling Spirit. There is no aptitude, no impulse, no faculty, no power of life which is not touched with the genius and fire of the Holy Spirit. Where the indwelling Spirit is, it is the whole personality, the whole man that receives enrichment. As many as are led by the Spirit of God are empowered with the perfection of filial happiness, strength and love. Thus in simple obedience to the guiding of the Spirit, in the faithful submission of all our powers to His consecration, we shall find the way of holiness in the very paths of our daily duties. We long to be perfect in some way of our own. That is not the way of the Spirit. The son is content with the guiding providence of the Father. In the way of filial obedience through the grace of the Spirit we shall find growth in holiness.

And the Spirit gives Vision. Those who are led by the Spirit have a growing insight into Truth. In the power of the Spirit we recognise the dignity of our individual life. We see ourselves as we truly

are, created, redeemed, sanctified by God Himself. A new value attaches to us because we are God's. To think of ourselves in the dignity of Sonship will prove one of the greatest remedies for that self-consciousness which is the perpetual perplexity of the earnest life. For whenever our thoughts rest upon ourselves, our own doings, our successes, our influence, our activities of any kind, then we shall remember that after all it is not our bare, isolated, natural selves upon which our mind is reflecting, but our eye rests upon God the Holy Spirit, whose energies and vigour suffuse all our activities with power. Look down whatever avenue of life and action that we will, it is not our mere unaided human selves that we see, but the soul inspired and upheld by the Spirit, and our thoughts rest ultimately not on self but on God.

It is in such ways that the gift of the Spirit enriches the individual life. And it is for us, who have the Spirit of God, to shew to others the happiness of such a Spirit-guided life and to lead them by the very joy of our own Christian experience to seek the secret of a life so blest.

I would my friends should see
In my glad eyes the beauty of His Face,
Should learn that in His presence there is peace,
Strength and contentment that can never cease.

Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.

O Holy Spirit of God, Fount of Wisdom and of Grace, enlighten me in heart and mind and will that I may see God and learn to do His Will. Lead me in the way of holiness and guide me into all truth, for His sake Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

XI

S. PAUL

ACTS IX. 1-20; XXII. 3-21; XXVI. 9-20

AFTER the great day of Pentecost there was no event more pregnant with mighty issues for the Church than the Conversion of Saul. That great conversion not only brought a pure and zealous soul under the dominion of Christ, not only claimed a splendid intellect for the propagation of the truth and bound a powerful and energetic will to the unceasing service of God, but it coloured all S. Paul's conception of God and provided the very categories of thought under which he was able to present the revelation of Christ in his mission teaching. It explained the reason why S. Paul never ceased in all his sufferings to apprehend Christ as the King of Glory, the triumphant Victor over death and sin, bringing freedom and redemption to fettered and sin-laden souls. And for the Church it was a critical moment. It marked the opening of a new era. For in the soul of the converted persecutor lay the seed of a world-wide

revolution. It was through the ministry of this latest-born Apostle that the Society of Jesus was to free itself from the bonds of Judaic prejudice and the dangers of local environment, and to claim its true place in God's purpose as the Universal Church, co-extensive with all mankind, the regenerator of the nations, the bearer of the light of truth to all the world, embracing within the scope of its redemptive powers every aspect and mode of human life and activity.

A.

In studying the life of S. Paul as an illustration of the Call of the Lord we can see the course of silent training by which God prepared him for his wonderful mission. It may be that the very success with which S. Paul accomplished his work blinds us to the great difficulty of his task. S. Paul was able to take such a conspicuous part in the history of the Church of the first century because of his own catholicity. The Catholicity of the Church was not the creation of S. Paul. But it needed a catholic man to interpret aright to the world the Catholicity of Christ and His Church. And in S. Paul there was an Apostle whose whole life, up till the moment of his conversion, had been a divinely ordered preparation for manifesting effectively to the world what the other Apostles could only pro-

claim immediately to a very limited circle. The training of S. Peter and S. Matthew had been but a poor preparation for an appeal to the Roman world. To say this is not to cast doubts upon the power of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. But the Spirit uses human personality as He finds it. The life of the Galilean Apostles was a circumscribed one. Their sympathies were Jewish. Their thoughts and habits were those of Palestine. They were unlettered, untrained men, sufficient and able enough as witnesses to the facts of Christ's life—indeed the more credible, the more effective for that purpose just because they had no intellectual theories of their own to warp their natural powers of observation. But the Church was to be world-wide. The truths of Christ's life must be presented by an Apostle in full sympathy with all the movements of the age. It needed one who knew what was best in Judaism and could yet enter into all the difficulties and hopes of the Gentile world, who had insight into the practical working of idolatry, who had a knowledge of the world, who could claim a commanding position in provincial society by reason of his Roman citizenship, who could compel the attention of the learned by the weight of his own splendid intellect, who could meet the philosopher, the aristocrat, the cultured pagan, the state official, each on his own ground. Such indeed was S. Paul. Trained at Tarsus, one of the three

great universities of the world, he was in touch with the best thought, philosophy and science of his age. Living in no secluded way, but enjoying the full freedom of a Jew of the Dispersion, he knew the difficulties and temptations of social life. As a Jew he was versed in the hopes of his own nation, and living a life of rigorous integrity and religious earnestness, he looked for the consolation of Israel, and was thus able to bring the new facts of the life of Christ to the test of a mind stored with a loving and accurate remembrance of Jewish tradition. As a Roman, from his study of Roman law and his frank admiration of the wonderful unity of the Roman Empire, S. Paul had gained that great genius for organisation which was needed to guide aright the spreading Kingdom of Christ.

It is very comforting to reflect on this guiding preparation of God. The life which may at this moment seem confused in its purpose, disappointing in its present achievements, or ineffective in its witness for holiness and truth, is being silently led on all the while towards a happy issue. It is easier to think of God as the Omega than to realise that He is the Alpha of each individual life. God has been before us in all things and is before us each day, preparing our world for us and leading us surely by the Holy Spirit through all the mazy wanderings of life. He leaves no aptitude unused. He takes joy in the quickening of every faculty, in

the development of every natural gift. He brings our manhood to perfection that it may witness more fully to His grace and love. "I have called thee by thy name. I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." So God Who has called us is silently preparing us. For us, as for Saul, the issue may well be hidden. We may hardly be conscious of the Divine purpose. But if in all our work we have just that fundamental sense of Vocation, which leads us to give ourselves with all our hearts to the work which is before us, as Saul ever did, then such a spirit of dedication and obedience will prove a true preparation for fulfilling the higher Call of the Lord when it shall be more clearly revealed. That is the glory of Saul. He was convinced of divine mission, he surrendered himself without reserve to the duty that lay before him, he waited upon God and when the Will of the Lord was revealed with convincing certainty, he was at once obedient to the heavenly vision. "One step enough for me" is true of our daily response to the divine leading. We may not see far before us, we may even mistake the real issue towards which we are tending, but where there is a faithful use of all our gifts and a willing and holy dedication of all our powers, where there is a pure love of the truth and a steadfast obedience to the highest, there can be no failure in fulfilling the divine

purpose. But for the happiness of our own lives and for the true understanding of so many great and gifted souls to whom God has not yet revealed Himself in the fulness of His loving purpose, we need to remember the long and silent preparation through which God patiently disciplines and lovingly trains those whom He calls to be His servants. It was truly said of that most majestic figure of Old Testament prophecy, the Servant of the Lord, "In the shadow of His Hand hath He *hid* me and made me a polished shaft." So does God hide us in the shadow of His Hand, when He would polish His shafts and prepare us for His work.

Recall the secret leadings of God's Providence and offer yourself afresh to fulfil your Vocation.

Almighty and loving God, Who hast made me for Thyself and hast led me all the days of my life in the ways of Thy Providence, grant me a knowledge of Thy Will and grace to obey Thee, that I may praise Thee for Thy protection and may follow whithersoever Thy love has called me, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

B.

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ." "It pleased God, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me." Those

are the phrases in which S. Paul afterwards spoke of the wonder of his Conversion. The Call of the Lord had truly been a Call "from my mother's womb," though not realised in its glorious certainty till God shined upon him out of darkness before the Damascus gate. The conversion of S. Paul was not the turning of a sinner from the ways of evil into the path of holiness and love. It was not like the conversion of S. Francis of Assisi, the sudden yielding of a soul to new ideals of beauty and of God, not like that of S. Augustine, the conquest of the better self over the lower nature after long years of wilful sin, nor like that of S. Ignatius Loyola, the sudden sense of the claim of God over human life. The conversion of S. Paul was not a moral change but a mental and spiritual illumination. He had always been a servant of God. The Jewish element had always been strongest in S. Paul's deeply religious character. He had a solemn reverence for the supremacy of God, a high ideal of righteousness and a zeal for the expression of that reverence and that righteousness according to the Law. He was not an ordinary Pharisee, not a formalist. He was a man of deep moral instincts. For him the Law of God was holy and good and demanded righteousness. To fight against the Law was to fight against God. When, then, a new agitation was stirred in Christian circles by the work of S. Stephen, and the Pharisees were drawn

to take part with the Sadducees in the persecution of the Church, Saul leapt to take the lead in defence of the Law. With the passionate zeal of sincere conviction he was ready to avenge the Christian contempt of the Mosaic Commandment. With the new leader came new methods. The death of S. Stephen had scattered the Christian evangelists. Saul would follow them throughout the Dispersion and with the authority of the Sadducees bring the Christians out of the control of the local synagogues into the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, which alone had power to condemn to death.

And as he hasted on this mission, relentlessly pushing on in the midday heat, even as the very goal of the Damascus gateway was in sight—he met Jesus. He had no doubt that Jesus was dead. Yet here in a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun was Jesus—Jesus in glory, radiant, risen, triumphant. “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.” It was no hallucination, no subjective, imaginary vision. It was an actual appearance. With his outward eyes Saul saw the glory, his lips framed the question, “Who art Thou, Lord?” his ears caught the answer, “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.” S. Paul in after days was always wont to distinguish this appearance of the Risen Lord from all the visions and other revelations of which he afterwards had peculiar experience. This was no ecstasy nor rapture. It was the

presentation of the risen Lord to him in visible form. S. Paul based his claim to Apostleship upon this vision of the Lord in glory meeting him before the gate of Damascus. If the other Apostles were qualified for their work of witness to Christ's Resurrection by their vision of Him during the great Forty Days, he too realised his own Call to the Apostolate in the epiphany of the Risen Lord before Damascus. It drove in upon him the certain conviction that Jesus lived. The Cross had not been the end as he had believed. The disciples were not impostors as he had thought. It was God Himself Who had chosen this way of conviction for His future Apostle. S. Paul always felt the pressure of the divine Will, the sovereignty of the divine Call, the urgency of the divine pursuit revealed at his conversion. He felt himself to be "apprehended by Christ Jesus." Nor can we wonder that to one who was to be such a unique instrument of the divine Will, God should be pleased to make special revelation. The physical blindness which followed upon the revelation of the risen Christ was doubtless a merciful provision for S. Paul, enforcing retreat and seclusion. His obedience was immediate and complete. He was brought to Ananias and as "less than the least of all saints" entered the Society of the risen Christ by the lowly door of Baptism. A short ministry of witness to the Deity of Jesus enabled him to attest

before the astonished Jews at Damascus the sincerity of his conversion. Then he withdrew to the solitude of Arabia that he might surrender himself entirely to the new Call of the Lord.

There in the retreat of Arabia, the Apostle meditating upon the new revelation of the risen Christ, gained a conviction of the truth of Christianity, an experience of the intimate nearness of Jesus the Saviour, a sense of the joy of forgiveness and of the glorious freedom of the service of God, which never left him. Recalling his old life of faithfulness under the Law, he realised how it was the discipline of the Law that had urged him forward to the obedience of Christ. The Law had demanded a righteousness which it was powerless itself to create. The Law left men with the sense of sin and gave no opportunity of forgiveness. In Christ there was not only a higher revelation of holiness and love which was the fulfilment of the very ideals of the Law, but there was the power of an endless life, which re-created men with the gift of the divine pardon and strengthened them with grace to obey the divine Will. The intense moral struggle which had torn the soul of the Apostle was ended. In surrendering every thought to the captivity of Christ he had found peace. And here S. Paul found the explanation of that mystery of triumphant happiness which had marked the lives of those followers of Christ whom he had harried

with persecution. He found how the words of Stephen the martyr must have been actually true. Before his eyes the heavens had indeed been opened and he had seen the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. It was not blasphemy after all. It was not mere imagining nor the illusory vision of a dying man. The Face of Christ, triumphant, glorious and loving, did beam upon His disciples, as they served Him in the path of witness and of daily duty. It was from that Face that light flowed upon all the ways of life, giving to men in direst need and sadness the glowing certainty of victory and of peace. Thus the meaning of the new faith sank into his soul and the days of solitude brought a new and deep spiritual experience which ratified his conviction of the reality of the risen life of our Lord.

And we too need solitude and retreat for the deepening of our convictions and the steadying of our beliefs. New truth may flash suddenly upon our lives. We need to brood and meditate upon it in reverent silence that we may assimilate it and really make it our own. Grace is given to us at moments of sacramental approach to God. We need quiet times of recollection and thought to gather up all our powers and submit them wholly to the new influence that God has set working in our souls. Each day we make our little Retreat of prayer and meditation and Bible-reading. It is

our "Arabia," confirming us in faith, opening up for us new experiences of fellowship with Christ, preparing us for our work of witness, assuring us of reality in our spiritual life. And sometimes we shall find leisure for a longer Retreat, in which God will take us up into the Mount and shew us the pattern of holy things and draw us nearer to Him in penitence and surrender, that He may send us forth like S. Paul, strengthened, assured, convinced, ready to make full proof of our ministry, pressing ever toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Pray that we may steadfastly follow in the faith and teaching of S. Paul.

O God, Who through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world, Grant, we beseech Thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto Thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C.

The experience of his own conversion left a mark on all the teaching of S. Paul. His own personal experience was so intense and his personality so forceful that it dominated all his thought and language. Even in the most impersonal letters his teaching is cast in terms of his own marvellous

experience, his own individuality suddenly breaks through in flashes of rare revelation. It constitutes at once the charm and the bewildering difficulty of his writings. No one ever cared less for style. His thoughts pour out like a torrent. His sentences, with their lavish wealth of vocabulary, their abrupt transitions and unexpected parentheses, are the natural expression of his rugged, strenuous and sincere character. He could not write an epistle which was not in some way a self-disclosure. And always the three great thoughts which are uppermost in his mind are the Grace of God, the glory of Christ and the union of Christ with His Church.

It was his own sense of the undeserved favour of God in calling him, the persecutor and blasphemer, to be the Apostle of His Love, that gave to S. Paul his characteristic doctrine of Grace. God was to him sovereign and supreme, guiding all the issues of life by His eternal decrees. And God had deigned to give to him the unmerited grace of becoming the Apostle of the Gentiles, by the effectual working of His power, so that he could preach among the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ. The riches of God, the wealth of grace, the eternity of the divine purpose, the supremacy of the divine Call, the loving kindness of God to the undeserving sinner, the unworthiness of man, the irresistible power of the divine Will—these are the most pregnant themes of S. Paul's teaching about God

in His relation to man, and they are based upon the spiritual experience of his own conversion.

And because it was the triumphant Christ Who appeared to him in the splendour of His risen and ascended glory, S. Paul's conception of the Lord was always touched with the thought of victory. He had never passed through the anxiety and bewilderment of the Twelve. He had never lost his Leader in the tomb. He had never known Christ in the flesh. Jesus was always the risen Christ to him, the Lord of glory, of life and of power. Light ever streamed from His Face. It is the reigning and triumphant Christ that is before the Apostle's eyes. There is a ringing tone of certainty and joy, of thankfulness and praise, of life and power in all his teaching. The Christian life is a risen life. The source and centre of its power are to be found in the Throne of God. Heaven is the true sphere of all Christian activities, because they are wrought in God. Our citizenship is in Heaven. It is in vital union with the glorified and triumphant Lord that all our Christian life is passed. There is no failure there, there can be no defeat. The Christian can speak in tones of conviction and assurance, for God is faithful. Here and now the heavenly life begins. God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ and hath raised us up together

and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Thus it is Christ as risen and triumphant Who is our hope and glory.

S. Paul had a very sincere and deep experience of his own individual relation to Christ, but with all his individualism he never forgot that the individual could only be perfected in the fellowship and society of others. And at the moment of his conversion, when Christ had said to the persecutor of the Christian Church, "Why persecutest thou Me?" S. Paul had learnt the vital union of Christ with His Church. To persecute the Church was to persecute Christ. Christ Himself lived in His Church. The Church was the very Body of Christ, in which all the members were knit together in unity of life by the indwelling Spirit. The corporate perfection of the Church was marred and broken by the failure of any member to perform its due function in the organism of the Body. If one member suffered, all the members suffered with it. If one member was honoured, all the members rejoiced with it. And Christ was so identified with the life of the Church that S. Paul could speak of the possibility of its members "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His Body's sake which is the Church." The life of Christ was reproduced not only in the individual, but in the whole Church. Its authority, its liberty, its holiness, were derived from Christ Himself. It

was the school of human life. No life could be brought to perfection in loneliness. Human life was to be made perfect that it might be offered to God. The Church was the only fellowship in which that individual life could be truly and fully consummated and prepared for God, because in it alone through the vital energies of the indwelling Spirit were to be found the re-creating powers of the divine life. Thus for S. Paul Christ was inseparable in thought from His Church. The Church was Christ in His redemptive activities towards men.

Such are some of the chief characteristics of the Apostle's teaching, which owed their emphasis and their very form to the circumstances of his conversion. The proof of them lies in the experience of S. Paul himself. They were not just the sudden impressions of early enthusiasm. But they stood the test of all the work of life. Persecution, failure, suffering, the shock of contact with the sordid ambition of the pagan world, the assaults of intellectual criticism and opposition, disappointments in the Christian witness of his early converts, the disillusionment of life in the great Roman cities, the temptations of court and camp and commerce—none of these things could shake his trust in the power of the risen Lord. When at length S. Paul crowned a life of heroic labour and perpetual suffering with the supreme witness of a martyr's death upon the Ostian Way at Rome, the light had

not died down. His faith had borne the brunt of all the hard experiences of life. Christ had sufficed. The revelation of God in Christ had equipped, sustained and strengthened a strong man for the work of a giant. It had satisfied all the claims of the intellect. It had responded to all the demands of a passionate, vigorous and enthusiastic nature. May it be ours also at the end of our earthly conflict to take upon our lips with lowly confidence the words of the brave Apostle, with which he closed his ministry of faithful witness: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Pray for steadfastness and courage in our witness for Christ.

Almighty and merciful God, Who didst call Saint Paul to be the Apostle of the Gentiles and didst enable him to fight the good fight and finish his course, keeping the faith, grant that in our service we may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that we may approve things that are excellent and may be sinless and without offence, and being stablished in holiness and filled with the fruits of righteousness, may adorn the doctrine of Christ our Saviour in all things to Thy honour and glory.

XII

THE VISION OF THE LORD

REVELATION I. 10-20 ; IV. ; V.

“ **B**LESSED are the eyes which see the things that ye see.” The words might have been spoken to us to-day. We are like the disciples to whom Christ spoke. We recognise the possibilities of Vision and the blessedness of our opportunities just as little as they. The Apostles and the gazing crowds had actually before them that very Vision for which the noblest of the ages had yearned unsatisfied, for which the wisest had strained their eyes unblessed, for which the aching and sorrowing hearts of the world had pined, dying un comforted, for which all good and holy men had longed and hoped. The Desire of all nations had come. God made Man, Love Incarnate stood before them—the perfect Man with words of grace and piercing eyes of flashing sympathy that read the souls of men, with heart of love, infinite in holiness and mercy—the world’s Ideal, its Redeemer and its King, the only Son of God. And the world was not seized

with the wonder of its blessing, the world did not prostrate itself at His feet, it raised no song of triumph at His Coming, nor gave love for Love, nor yielded sovereignty nor gave Him worship. Only men were moved with strange, momentary wonder at His words, seeing no god-like beauty in His sorrowing Love. Blindly they closed their hearts to His appeal and drove Him down the dolorous way to Calvary.

Are we much better than they? To us too the Vision will not come in ways that we expect. We are not without vision. We have our hopes, great and noble hopes, but they are not God's. His ways are so different from our ways. The Vision of God, even of the risen Christ, is not yet a vision of ecstatic loveliness and ineffable splendour. It is a vision first of lowliness, so lowly that perhaps we say we have no vision. For all is grey and dull and dark. There is no clear prospect, no bright outline, only a vague and formless haze. Yet all the while we might hear the words of Jesus ringing in our ears, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." The vision is ours already. We see. We see enough to know that God is with us. We know that the Hand of everlasting Love has never ceased to guide us, that God Himself feeds and strengthens us with His own perfect Life. We know that His merciful forgiveness has raised us from the depths of sin and set us upon the hills

of hope. We know that sorrow and trouble and the ache of heart and brain are but the messengers of a Love that waits upon us with gifts that pass man's understanding. All this we know. And thus we see Christ already standing before us. "When we see God," says the old saint, "we see what we desire." And with the opening vision of God desire grows. For as in the great Forty Days, so is it now. The risen Christ leads on His disciples with ever-growing revelation of Himself to a vision yet more glorious.

A.

And for that Vision the risen Christ Himself prepares us by the discipline of faith, by the revelation of truth, by the quickening of hope. The vision is the gift of God indeed, but there is a preparation needed on our part to make the gift possible and profitable to our souls. There must be moral integrity, purity of intention, uprightness of character, truthfulness and sincerity. The great cardinal virtues of justice, honour, truthfulness and chastity must prepare our eyes for spiritual vision. Without them there can be no door opened in Heaven. Men ask why they have not greater vision. The quest of the grail is for the pure in heart, the guileless, the loving. The elementary laws of love and truth and equity must be obeyed before higher truth can be recognised. The con-

science must be both alert and pure. Yet often the morality of the devout has proved the casuistry of Satan. No sanctity, no height of ecstasy in spiritual things can absolve from the rigorous obligations of truth and simple honesty. Sometimes the spiritual vision is dark because the character is warped with evil. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. That holiness is not the high devotion of some superior soul, but the plain goodness of a soul that simply seeks to do right. From such the vision of the risen Christ will not be long withheld.

And where there is to be growing vision, there must be docility, the alert ear, the readiness to learn, the willingness to take pains and make effort. The mind and conscience alike must be educated and put to school. There must be welcome given to all that disciplines the powers of the mind to a readier apprehension of the truth. The love of truth itself must be sought, prejudices set aside and prepossessions questioned. There must be an outgoing of the self not only in the ways of thought, but in ways of fellowship with others, as we seek to take up the interests of other lives into the progress and growth of our own. While we are ready to shirk no issue which new discovery suggests in the realm of thought and knowledge, we shall open our eyes wide, and keep them open, to the reality and fulness of the great life that surrounds us, and we

shall seek to know it at its best. The world and its work need be no hindrance to our vision of God. Has it not been said that the wonders of creation are the very footprints of the Creator? Himself as yet we cannot see, but we are on the road that leads to vision when we admire Him in the things that He has made. So life with all it brings of responsibility and fellowship and work may be for us the very mirror of God.

But to gain the fulness of vision there must be true spiritual aspiration, a real use of the spiritual side of our nature. All men have the spiritual faculty. It is that which prompts all ideals, which urges us perpetually forward. It is the very breath of God in our lives, separating us from the brute creation. We must recognise the spirit as the master-element in human life. Such spiritual aspiration means the recognition of the eternal and heavenly behind the veil of the temporal, the acknowledgment of the supremacy of the spirit even in the realm of matter. When that aspiration is touched with belief in Christ, it gives a very definite vision of the unseen. God, the personal, loving Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is recognised as the ultimate, ever-present reality of life, revealed through Jesus the Incarnate and working to-day through the sacramental agencies of His Church for the restoration of mankind. This power of spiritual apprehension must be trained and exer-

cised by acts of simple faith. There must be great hopes, high ideals, bold expectations of God. This faculty is fed upon the Revelation of God in Scripture, in Prayer and Sacrament. There is a perpetual reaching out after God, if haply we may find Him. Such are the conditions of preparedness for vision—truth of heart, truth of mind and truth of soul.

These cannot compel vision. The vision is God's gift. But the gift will never fail where the conditions for its possibility are found. The awakened heart, the eager hope, the direction of the life towards the highest, the desire for service, the humble thought of self, the sense of the Infinite—these are the sure harbingers of vision. God will make Himself known. Our eyes shall see the King in His Beauty even now. The vision of the risen Christ comes with the power of immediate conviction. It holds supreme sway over life, determining all relations, sanctifying every interest, enhancing all the values of life. In the fullest sense which the words can bear, the words of the old saint are true, "The life of man is the vision of God." The vision of God is our life. It may come in myriad ways, it may shew itself in various forms, but it brings always the same assurance of power, the same certitude of victory, the same sense of joy and peace, ratifying with the conviction of undeniable truth the great Call of the risen Lord.

Pray for the right direction of heart and will.

O Almighty God, Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest and desire that which Thou dost promise, that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

B.

For all time S. John has pictured to us the Vision of Heaven with a beauty of symbol which must colour all our thoughts about God. Not only is he conscious of the shining Figure of "one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle," with snow-white hair and flaming eyes, with glistening feet and resounding voice, walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks of His Church on earth, but he looks through the opened door of Heaven and sees the Throne on high, where One sat that "was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone," where in the midst "stood a Lamb as it had been slain," with "seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God," before which the living creatures and the twenty-four elders bowed in

adoration, joining with the angelic chorus in the worship of the Lamb. For S. John, since the Incarnation, earth is the sphere of heavenly ministries, the seat of heavenly worship, the home of heavenly vision. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Jesus walks in the midst of His Church. There can be no ministry of the Church in which Jesus is not revealed. We can see that divine Form moving in and out in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. It was the vision of this glorious Presence in the lowly surroundings of the infant Church of Asia Minor that had cheered the Apostle through his long years of faithful ministry and witness. The powers of the world might persecute, the forces of paganism might threaten to overwhelm the faith of the Church, but the Presence of the Saviour was the pledge of victory and the assurance of life. S. John knew that it was the Christians that walked in light. The powers of regeneration, the strength that goes to ensure social progress, the forces that purify and ennoble life, these he knew could be found only in the new and vital energies of divine grace which fructified life through the sacraments of the Church of Christ. However strong the present forces of the world might be, the future lay with Christ and His Church. Thus in the daily services

of the Christian Altar, in the gathering of two or three in Christian worship, the Apostle saw the cheering Presence of the risen Christ, the Lord of victories and of life. And beyond, S. John had the still more wonderful vision of the heavenly Throne, the seat of all energy and power and love. Before the majestic Vision of the Father and the Lamb, his spirit bowed in adoration. With the songs of the redeemed and of the angels he joined his cry of praise and worshipped with the elders round the Throne. It was this spirit of adoring worship that gave him that deeper insight into the mysteries of God, that strong assurance of the divine triumph, that glad thankfulness for the daily blessings of redemption, which his great vision of the Apocalypse reveals. And for us too the same Vision waits. Ever in the frequent sacramental ministries of Church life, we see Christ Himself, in the power of His risen and ascended glory, passing in and out amongst us here on earth, quickening our souls with new energy of life, healing all sorrow, and curing all evil with the touch of His holy Hand, pouring His benediction upon every interest and relation of life. The world becomes aflame with God. As this Vision holds our eyes, we lose sight of all the inadequacy of ritual, the poverty of symbol, the meanness of outward expression, the unworthiness of service, we see only the great and essential reality, the Presence of Jesus. We strive

with all beauty and dignity of ritual to express something of the inward loveliness and glory of that great gift. But even where that outward dignity and reverence may fail, we shall lose the sense of all else in the certainty and joy of our Lord's Presence. Nothing can dim for us the glorious consciousness of the Presence of our blessed Lord. Where He is content to manifest Himself, there are we glad to be. So we move through the world with the vision of Heaven before us, not as some prophetic interpretation of glories yet to come, but as the mirror of what already is. We are in heavenly places. The worship of Heaven begins for us already. All sacrifice and suffering is the vision of the "Lamb as it had been slain." All joy and gladness must bring to our eyes the worship of the living creatures and the adoring elders before the Throne. All gifts of intellect, and capacity and worth, all spiritual power and sympathy and insight, recall the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb." Over all the sorrows and distresses, over all the fierce temptations and assaults of evil, shines the vision of the glorious Victor, going forth in His might, conquering and to conquer. Above all the wailings and laments, above all the cowardice and shrinking fears of the weak, rises the strong cry of faith, "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice

of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Contemplate the glories of Heaven.

"I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."—

"These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

C.

So in the very midst of our work we who respond to the Call of the risen Lord may climb the Mount of Vision and lose ourselves in the cloud of glory. When God gives vision, He gives it not for the mere indulgence of the soul's desire of beauty, but as a preparation for new work and fresh endeavour. Just as He took the disciples up into the Mount of Transfiguration that they might be strengthened to understand the coming Passion, just as He

shewed Himself in His risen glory to the disciples that they might be equipped for the mighty work of witness that lay before them, so when the Vision comes to us in sacrament and meditation and prayer, it is to lead us on to new obedience and higher sacrifice and service of love. Under the impulse of that vision we carry God Himself into our work. And the vision never fails. Through all the work itself we see God. It is not that we have a deep apprehension of the glorious mystery of the Divine Being. God does sometimes grant to us wonderful visions of spiritual things, which uplift the soul for many a day and make the dullest service bright with the divine glory. That may be sometimes. But there is yet a vision for all times. In all our activity it is not just the work in its immediate usefulness or beauty that we see, but we see God Himself. We desire and we see, not success, not perfection, not merely the Will of God, but God Himself. He is the conscious end of all. This, and this alone, gives to our work the spirit of abiding endurance, and stamps it with the mark of eternity. No other vision can sustain us through all the drudgery of life. "Only work that is for God alone hath an unceasing guerdon of delight." The vision is the vision not merely of God, but of God made Man, the vision of the Incarnate. This is the revelation of power under conditions of weakness, of glory hidden under the

veil of misery, of beauty under the guise of unloveliness. This is the Vision that stimulates to suffering and to work, for the Incarnate has given Himself victoriously to the suffering of the Cross and has achieved triumphantly the work of Redemption. And those who would follow in the blessed steps of His most holy Life are called not only to the joys of intimate fellowship, not only to the happiness of undying Vision, but to the ministry of service. "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His Face." With service the vision grows. In prayer and sacrament the new vision of God dawns with fresh power upon the soul. He makes Himself known to us in the Breaking of the Bread, that we may make Him known to others. The Vision is given to us that we may lead others to vision also. So with our very faces reflecting the divine glory we descend from the Mount of Vision, coming in the power of God to the help of the world. And with every act of love and sacrifice and pain, the Vision glows afresh. Day by day joy grows in our hearts that above all the loud voices of the world we have heard and we have followed the great Call of the risen Lord. This is the Call to victory and to vision. Already God hath shined in our hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. Day by day the light grows and the glory of the Lord shines in more perfectly upon our lives.

Our thanksgiving rises to God that with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

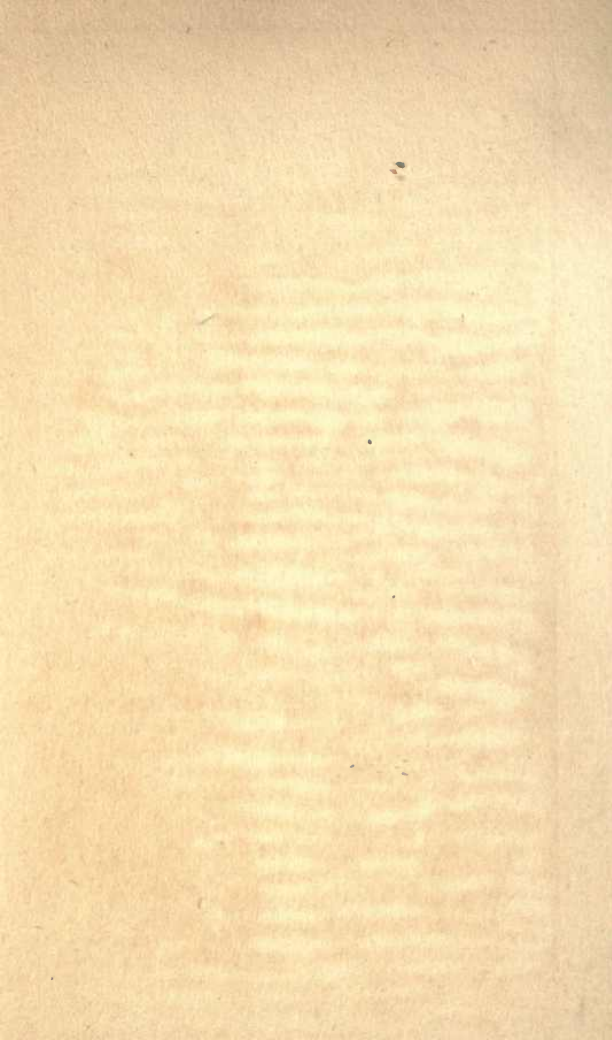
Make an act of self-oblation to God.

O my Lord, I am not mine own, but Thine. Take me for Thine own. I give myself to Thee for joy, for sorrow, for sickness, for health, for life, for death, for time and for eternity. Make me and keep me Thine own.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I worship Thee, I glorify Thee, I give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. I desire in all things to submit myself unto Thee ; and I ask the help of Thy Holy Spirit, that I may so love that which Thou hast revealed, that I may be more and more conformed to that which Thou dost will. And what I ask for myself I ask for all those for whom Thou hast died, that those who sin against Thee may be turned to love Thee, and that those who love Thee may be drawn closer to Thee to the glory of the Father.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.





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